

Open Research Online

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

Withholding communication - a relational approach to silence in an inter-organisational project group in the UK

Thesis

How to cite:

Mumford, Clare (2015). Withholding communication - a relational approach to silence in an inter-organisational project group in the UK. PhD thesis Open University.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 2015 The Author

Version: Version of Record

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data [policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

oro.open.ac.uk

Withholding communication -
a relational approach to silence in an
inter-organisational project group in the UK

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of

The Open University

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Clare Mumford, BA, MSc

Open University Business School

November 2015

ABSTRACT

This thesis takes an exploratory look at the phenomenon of silence in the ethnographic setting of an inter-organisational project, to review how project group members talk about their own practice of silence within the ongoing process of project delivery. The research swaps a transmission model of communication, which has been used in much of the previous work on silence in the field of organisational behaviour, for a dialogic model of communication, which prioritises temporal contingency and local processes of meaning-making in order to explore how participants develop the social significance of silence.

Firstly, the thesis shows how participants discursively construct silence as an emergent phenomenon connected with the development and maintenance of social relationships through the lifecycle of the project. I identify three common-sense storylines (Davies and Harré, 1990) - each with a different underpinning logic: of relating, of representing, and of doing - which provide discursive resources by means of which participants position their practice of silence within the management of different types of relationship.

Secondly, the thesis covers how silence emerges in various *forms* over the course of the project lifecycle: as discrete acts of withholding but also as outcomes of other processes of social interaction. What emerges from the use of a dialogic model of communication is a potential new approach to silence in organising processes, which focuses less on silence as a discrete entity produced by an agentic individual and more on its temporal and embodied features in a way that may help to integrate some of the diverse organisational and management perspectives on the topic.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to:

- Caroline Ramsey, Richard Holti, Diane Preston: for supervision and constant support;
- Ceri Mumford, Jonaz Kanzler, Wendy Mumford, Michael Mumford, Carolyn Stone, Mick Murphy: for letting me practice on them with ideas and drafts, for their discussions and support, and for proofreading;
- Sarah Mukherjee, Jo Vincett, Deneise Dadd: for chats about PhDs and social distractions;
- Stephen Collins: for his Vague Scientist cartoon which made me laugh for more than three years while I sat writing on my own (and which I reproduce with his kind permission at the end of this document);
- and of course the anonymous research participants who allowed me access to their project and who generously gave up their time to answer my questions.

I am very grateful to them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	8
1.1	The background story to the shape of this thesis	11
1.2	The research aim and the objective of this thesis.....	15
1.3	The research questions	15
1.3.1	<i>A discursive construction of silence: three storylines</i>	<i>16</i>
1.3.2	<i>A re-examination of the phenomenon (phenomena) of silence.....</i>	<i>17</i>
1.4	The significant research contribution of the thesis.....	19
1.5	The research setting: silence within an inter-organisational project group	19
1.6	Theoretical underpinning	21
1.6.1	<i>A glossary of terminology.....</i>	<i>23</i>
1.7	Structure of the thesis.....	26
2	LITERATURE REVIEW - SILENCE	28
2.1	Binary opposition: silence - sound	29
2.2	Binary opposition: absence - presence.....	31
2.3	Binary opposition (or not?): silence - voice	34
2.4	Consequences of silence	45
2.5	Employees' stories about their silence.....	48
2.6	Psychological and sociological perspectives: Argyris and Goffman	51
2.7	Antecedent causes of silence	53
2.7.1	<i>'Perceived safety' and risks of speaking up.....</i>	<i>53</i>
2.7.2	<i>'Perceived efficacy', futility and power.....</i>	<i>55</i>
2.8	Roles, role boundaries and silence.....	56
2.9	Sensemaking and learning to stay silent	58
2.10	Summary.....	59
3	THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNICATION.....	61

3.1	Analysing the transmission model of communication	62
3.2	Introducing a dialogic model of communication.....	64
3.2.1	<i>Bakhtin's dialogic discourse</i>	65
3.2.2	<i>The relational nature of communication, the self and silence</i>	67
4	THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK	72
4.1	The research design.....	72
4.2	A dialogic form of ethnography.....	76
4.2.1	<i>Ethnography of communication</i>	77
4.2.2	<i>Linguistic ethnography</i>	78
4.2.3	<i>My own ethnographic approach (and why it is not autoethnography)</i>	79
4.3	Choosing the research setting.....	82
4.4	Negotiating and maintaining access	85
4.5	Methodology.....	87
4.6	Methods.....	88
4.6.1	<i>Interviews</i>	88
4.6.2	<i>Participant observation</i>	90
4.6.3	<i>Video and audio recordings of project group meetings</i>	91
4.7	An example of the dialogue between video, fieldnotes and interview data.....	94
4.8	Reflexivity.....	99
4.9	Data analysis and coding.....	102
4.9.1	<i>The tools for discourse analysis</i>	104
4.9.2	<i>Discursive positioning and storylines</i>	106
4.10	Transcription.....	110
4.11	Writing, representation and validity	112
4.11.1	<i>Organising the structure: four data chapters</i>	113
4.11.2	<i>Using extracts from the data</i>	115
4.11.3	<i>Anonymising and fictionalising</i>	118
4.12	Ethics	119

4.12.1	<i>The ethics of not knowing in advance the research parameters</i>	119
4.12.2	<i>The ethics of telling or not telling other people's stories</i>	120
5	INTRODUCING THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH SETTING	123
5.1	Description of the project(s) - Urban Park / Quay to the Manor	123
5.2	Description of the project group participants	126
5.3	The project group meetings and communications	129
5.4	An introduction to the four data-focused chapters	130
6	THE EARLY DAYS OF THE PROJECT AND 'THE STOCKHOLM INCIDENT'	132
6.1	Early struggles to understand the two sides of the work	133
6.2	A second story, of council officer collusion and strategic silence	142
6.3	Learning each other's language	146
6.3.1	<i>Alison: staying silent and trusting others to deliver</i>	150
6.3.2	<i>Nina: glossing over what you want to say</i>	153
6.4	Summary of emergent themes	157
7	COUNCIL INVOLVEMENT IN A WORKSHOP	160
7.1	The first discussion about the workshop	161
7.2	Silence in relation to uncertainty, learning and experience	164
7.3	Silence in relation to role duties: in-role and extra-role voice	169
7.4	The second discussion about the workshop: Nina speaking up	172
7.5	Two accounts about the workshop and different types of silence	174
7.5.1	<i>Nina: the workshop conversation as a site of frustration</i>	174
7.5.2	<i>Kerry: the workshop conversation as indication of satisfaction</i>	176
7.6	Summary of emergent themes	177
8	COMMUNITY TALKS AND POSTERS	181
8.1	The first conversation about the talks	182
8.2	The second discussion about the talks	185

8.3	Silence when caught in the middle	192
8.3.1	<i>Nina, caught between Sean and Kerry</i>	193
8.3.2	<i>Martin, caught between Sean and Nina</i>	196
8.4	Constructing appropriate communication during conflict	197
8.4.1	<i>Martin: silence and temporary deferral</i>	197
8.4.2	<i>Paul: politeness and dropping issues</i>	199
8.4.3	<i>Sean: speaking up on matters of importance</i>	204
8.4.4	<i>Alison: being able to judge when to step back</i>	209
8.5	A retrospective construction of the risk of silence	212
8.6	Summary of emergent themes	215
9	THE TRANSFER OF PROJECT WORK TO THE COUNCIL	218
9.1	Moving to the end of the project stage: different patterns of voice	220
9.2	The discussion in the meeting about the transfer of work	221
9.3	Silence when it is no longer your role to speak up	223
9.4	Staying silent before matters are properly worked out	228
9.5	One person's silence in dialogue with another's voice	231
9.6	Silence and power: appropriating others' voices for influence	234
9.7	Not talking about hidden agendas	239
9.8	Silence and power-holding: participating versus chairing	243
9.9	How acoustic silence is not the same as withholding	247
9.10	Summary of emergent themes	250
10	DISCUSSION - STORYLINES OF SILENCE	254
10.1	Storyline 1 - interpersonal relationship management	255
10.1.1	<i>Summary and relational logic</i>	255
10.1.2	<i>Storyline 1 implications for silence</i>	257
10.1.2.1	Getting to know someone: the changing efforts of communicating	259
10.1.2.2	Collective sensemaking, groups and audience	261
10.2	Storyline 2 - representation and responsibility	263

10.2.1	<i>Summary and relational logic</i>	263
10.2.2	<i>Storyline 2 implications for silence</i>	265
10.2.2.1	The authorising voice of other characters outside the group	265
10.2.2.2	Timing, involvement and silence	267
10.2.2.3	Roles, role-spanning and professionalism	269
10.3	Storyline 3 - pragmatic action and influence	272
10.3.1	<i>Summary and relational logic</i>	272
10.3.2	<i>Storyline 3 implications for silence</i>	274
10.3.2.1	Priorities and damage limitation	275
10.3.2.2	Working through others and power	277
10.4	Storyline narratives of good workers delivering complex work	282
10.5	Implications for practice	285
10.6	A short summary for Research Question 1	286
11	DISCUSSION - SILENCE IN DIALOGIC DISCOURSE	288
11.1	Four forms of silence	290
11.1.1	<i>Silence as a discrete act of withholding</i>	290
11.1.2	<i>Silence as a state</i>	293
11.1.3	<i>Interpreted withholding</i>	296
11.1.4	<i>Unheard voice</i>	298
11.2	The implications for the theoretical understanding of silence in organising processes	299
11.2.1	<i>A situated approach to silence as withholding</i>	300
11.2.2	<i>The relationship between silence and voice</i>	303
11.3	A short summary for Research Question 2	306
12	CONCLUDING COMMENTS	308
12.1	Limitations of the study	309
12.2	Lessons learnt as a novice researcher	310
12.3	Future research	312
12.3.1	<i>Furthering the investigation of withholding</i>	312

12.3.2	<i>Developing the storylines: inter- versus intra-organisational work</i>	314
12.3.3	<i>Being misunderstood</i>	315
12.4	A final summary	316
	Appendix A - Original email request seeking projects	318
	Appendix B - Information sheet and consent form for research participants	320
	Appendix C - Interview protocols	322
	Appendix D - Transcription conventions	324
	Appendix E - Coding framework	327
	Bibliography	331

List of Tables

Table 1 - Meeting attendance and post-meeting discussions about silence	page 130
---	----------

List of Figures

Figure 1 - The positioning of silence as a phenomenon	page 88
Figure 2 - Example of the conceptual modelling in NVivo	page 330

1 INTRODUCTION

Organisational and management researchers tend to use two arguments to support the proposition that research on silence matters: that such research can ultimately lead to better outcomes, firstly, for the organisation or group, and secondly for the individual (Greenberg and Edwards, 2009; Perlow and Williams, 2003). The first argument points to theoretical constructions, such as Hirschman's (1970) model of exit, voice and loyalty, to suggest that *not speaking up* has negative impacts for the output of discussions in groups or organisations, since this behaviour fails to reveal potential problems or concerns that should be addressed.¹ The second argument points to the self-reports about the phenomenon, which suggest that people are often uncomfortable about speaking up but nevertheless wish to do so (Milliken, Morrison and Hewlin, 2003). The study of silence matters, because silence matters to the people who are being silent, who become demoralised or disengaged without opportunities to speak up (Beugré, 2010; Bowen and Blackmon, 2003; Harlos, 2001; Kahn, 2010; Shapiro, 1993).

Silence research seems to have burgeoned in recent years, then, largely due to the assertion that employees' contributions - opinions, suggestions, ideas - can be beneficial when expressed, and harmful when withheld (Brinsfield, 2014; Greenberg and Edwards, 2009; Morrison, 2011). In this regard, silence is given some significance in relation to the opposite construct of voice. Yet there are arguably some difficulties with this. Firstly, there seems to be a truism involved: that is, researchers state that it is important to find ways to overcome silence, because voice is useful to express (e.g. Perlow and Williams, 2003). Yet voice is given positive

¹ See for instance the discussion in Bowen and Blackmon (2003) and Morrison and Milliken (2000).

connotations because it is *defined* that way, as part of the construct developed by the researcher - for example, as improvement-oriented voice or as constructive challenge (Morrison, 2011) - and silence becomes negative simply by becoming positioned as the opposite of voice. The second difficulty is that empirical research approaches that study silence in terms of being an opposite of voice, risk missing some important aspects about silence as a social phenomenon, and not least, may have paid too little attention so far to what *is* the phenomenon of silence under investigation! There is an ongoing debate about the relationship between silence and voice, and to what extent one is simply the opposite of the other (Brinsfield, 2014; Brinsfield et al., 2009; Morrison, 2011); there is also a debate in regard to the lack of clarity about the concept of silence. Brinsfield (2014, p.125), for instance, describes the study of silence as being in an 'adolescent phase', with significant gaps in knowledge and a lack of integration across different research agendas which, he suggests, has led currently to 'construct ambiguity, construct proliferation and redundancy, conceptual myopia, and methodological issues'.

It is silence that is the main focus of this thesis. I present here an exploratory study, using a social constructionist theoretical perspective, in a research field that is currently under-theorised, and which so far has been dominated by a positivist lens (Brinsfield, 2014; Morrison, 2011).² My ethnographic study focuses on how participants in an inter-organisational project group discursively construct and explicate their own silence over a period of six months of project delivery, and how these constructions are embedded in the ongoing delivery of the project. I trace how silence is given social significance within the context of the project group's organising processes, when outcomes are still uncertain. I take the focus away from

² See Brown and Coupland (2005) and Fletcher and Watson (2007) for rare qualitative exceptions to this statement.

silence in organisations (Morrison and Milliken, 2000) and move it onto silence within processes of organising (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Weick, 1979), in this instance, of an inter-organisational project being delivered by a university and two local authorities. While I contribute to extending the small amount of empirical work which specifically examines silence across team and interdisciplinary boundaries (Bienefeld and Grote, 2013; Cosley et al., 2014; Edmondson, 2003), I want to contribute more generally to the discussions about silence and voice in organising processes, and specifically to the organisational behaviour (OB) literature³ on silence and voice.

While previous OB literature has identified the importance of relational qualities as both a cause of and solution for silence (e.g. Edmondson, 2003; LePine and Van Dyne, 1998; Pinder and Harlos, 2001), few studies have actually examined these relational processes. Instead, they have used survey designs or interviews to reconstruct these processes in a different time and space. By embedding the concept of silence and the discursive talk about it within the unfolding process of social interaction, my intention is to offer some thoughts about silence from a perspective where communicative processes are not clear-cut, and where meaning-making is not transparent but local and contingent; from a perspective of returning to 'the thing itself' (Husserl, cited in Merleau-Ponty, 1962: viii), without starting from *a priori* hypothetical assumptions about the form or function, or the causes or consequences, of silence. The methodological approach sweeps away the presupposition of objective (Cunliffe, 2011) stable and identifiable entities and concepts, and instead prioritises a 'becoming' process ontology (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002) in which

³ I use the term 'organisational behaviour' (and OB) primarily for brevity's sake, to embrace OB but also organisational learning and organisational psychology perspectives, since the latter could also be seen as relevant fields.

accounts of silence emerge and change over time, and in which I aim to locate specific acts of withholding within the social interaction.

To some extent, the thesis contains a study within a study, as my original research focus developed into a new question about the nature of silence during the fieldwork phase. The research initially started by seeking to investigate the concept of conscious *withholding*. However, during ethnographic fieldwork this concept became more difficult to work with. The core 'inner' study of my PhD research investigates how project group participants discursively construct their own practice of silence. The 'outer' study uses these discursive constructions to show how the concept of withholding in the OB literature is itself shaped (and left unclear) by the use of a particular discourse about silence and voice.

In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I describe my original interest, how it shaped the final form of the thesis, and the changes that happened along the way. I briefly compare my own interest in the subject with that described in the academic research literature, covered in more depth in Chapter 2, in order to establish where and how my study differs in focus. I set out the research aim and research questions, the aim of this thesis and its intended original contribution, some brief detail about the theoretical approach of the research, and the rationale for using an inter-organisational project group as the research setting. Finally I describe the structure for the remaining chapters as a guide to how the arguments in the thesis develop.

1.1 The background story to the shape of this thesis

My move into PhD study was inspired by my own experiences in project work where, as a project group member, I spent significant periods of time in meetings caught up in talk with other group members about matters that, to me, seemed

irrelevant and tangential to what was most significant and pressing. It was voice rather than silence that I experienced as more immediately problematic in this sense. I wondered why people were raising particular issues and why, in contrast, other significant topics that we spoke about in the kitchen or corridor afterwards had not been mentioned. What I became interested in was the process by which people decided *not* to share information, concerns or suggestions more formally within the group. The phenomenon of staying silent was one that I myself recognised, as I recalled meetings where I had decided not to raise a query or offer a point of information. However, I was keen to find out if my experience was similar to that of other people: how did other members of project groups develop an understanding of the idea of not speaking up about something? What type of comments did people decide not to communicate? What criteria were people using in these different situations?

When I started my literature review, there was no lack of reading material on silence in the workplace.⁴ Nevertheless, very little of this literature covered precisely the situation in which I was interested. A significant amount of the research on *employee silence* referred very specifically to situations of wrongdoing: of reporting injustice, harassment or unfair practice (e.g. Pinder and Harlos, 2001), ending in the extreme of whistleblowing (e.g. Miceli and Near, 1988). The conclusions tended to state that a sense of fear and/or futility were causing people to stay silent (e.g. Greenberg and Edwards, 2009; Kish-Gephart et al., 2011; Perlow and Williams, 2003) and that the aim should be to encourage people to speak up instead of staying

⁴ To illustrate the volume of work on silence generally: a literature search on the word *silence* returned a huge range of articles and papers: on 29 August 2014, there were for instance 2,479 from the database Business Source Complete, and 5,618 from the British Library's Zetoc in which the word appeared in the title. Although there were far fewer records for *employee silence*, the low number masks the wide range of research linking the concept to that of voice.

silent. I was more interested in the day-to-day sharing of thoughts, opinions and ideas among colleagues, how people engaged in more mundane communication. My research aim was not to find ways to encourage speaking up but to explore participants' own descriptions of the phenomenon of silence. The first point to note therefore is that in this study I am not starting from a point of view that silence is *necessarily* a negative phenomenon.

The second point that distinguishes my research from previous empirical work is that I wanted to understand silence from within a flow of social action. Much of the previous organisation and management-related research on silence and voice had used research designs such as surveys and questionnaires, which extracted silence out of social context (e.g. Milliken, Morrison and Hewlin, 2003). I was interested in investigating the notion of silence more inductively, as a phenomenon unfolding within the process of delivering project work. It was with this in mind that I started my ethnographic investigation of one project group to understand how the idea of staying silent might be given some meaning in everyday matters of project delivery.

As I proceeded with fieldwork, however, I realised that people were talking in a slightly different way than I had imagined about the topic. My questions which asked participants about the content of their withholding, what they kept silent about, only rarely received a direct answer. Instead of talking about specific acts of withholding, people reframed and redirected the question (Morrison and Macleod, 2014) and talked about something slightly different: they identified sensitive moments in the meeting; or a topic that had been challenging to talk about but which nevertheless had been discussed; or they commented on the behaviour of other members of the group and offered interpretations of what they might have been thinking. I had developed my research design with a social constructionist

perspective, and I was prepared for people's accounts to be situated, for them to require some local interpretation, and for me to be a co-constructor in the process, but I had not been anticipating no identification of withholding at all. Yet the data I was generating did not feel like the withholding that featured in other empirical research reports (compare Milliken, Morrison and Hewlin, 2003) in which employees could construct coherent stories of what they withheld and why.

I realised I had been sharing with the OB literature on employee silence one particular assumption about communicative processes which, when I attempted to apply it in ethnographic fieldwork, soon became problematic: the assumption that silence is somehow a discrete, consciously-constituted entity that is clearly communicable. After spending some time trying to analyse what seemed like problematic data, slowly certain patterns started to emerge. What people were talking about were particular stories of relationships and relational problems. Various different forms of silence - not simply silence as discrete acts of withholding - were being discursively constructed within the relational dimensions of this talk. When I returned to the literature for further guidance, I noticed that the emphasis on the importance of the quality of social relationships had been present all along, but had been to some extent obscured by being presented in terms of antecedent variables which influenced silence or voice behaviour, in effect separating the conditions for silence from the phenomenon of silence itself. This started to seem problematic to me.

The third point that distinguishes my work on silence from much of the previous OB research emerges directly from this point, and at a slightly later time than the previous two points. My work swaps the transmission model of communication (see Wertsch, 2001/1990) for a model of communication based on Mikhail Bakhtin's

dialogic discourse (Bakhtin, 1981). In the transmission model, communication is conceptualised as a transparent process of information transmission in which meaning is contained within a consciously-constructed communicative parcel that is transferred between two separate agents of sender and receiver. In Bakhtin's theory, actors, utterances and meaning-making processes cannot be so clearly separated. (Chapter 3 discusses the distinction between the two models in more depth.) This thesis discusses some of the implications of this swap for the understanding of silence in organising processes, and returns to the issue of the relationship between silence and voice with which I opened this chapter.

1.2 The research aim and the objective of this thesis

The specific aim of the research from which this thesis has been developed was to explore the embedded phenomenon of silence - and explicitly the phenomenon of withholding as a distinct phenomenological construction - in an empirical context. The wider purpose of my research was to contribute to the endeavours to join up, and read across, a diverse set of approaches and literatures on the topic of silence and voice in organisation and management studies, in order subsequently to be able to make better use of the insights brought out in each one.

The objective of the thesis is to address the two research questions outlined below.

1.3 The research questions

1. What patterning emerges in the ways in which members of an inter-organisational project group discursively construct their own practice of silence over the period of the project lifecycle, and what does this patterning suggest for the social significance for silence?

2. What are the implications of using a dialogic model of communication within an ethnographic study for the theoretical understanding of silence in organising processes?

The following two sections elaborate in more depth how I address each question.

1.3.1 A discursive construction of silence: three storylines

In the first research question, I seek to explore the different ways in which social significance is given to the concept of silence in the various accounts provided by project group members over the lifecycle of a project, while project tasks are still being delivered, relationships among group members still being developed, and project outcomes still uncertain. What I present in the thesis is the socially constructed local discourse about silence that group members offer to me in conversation and which I interpret through my reflexive participant observer positioning within the social interaction. I address the situational context in which participants tell me about becoming silent, or staying silent, or breaking a silence, and how such telling creates particular understandings about the function of silence in this project context.

What I propose is that three discursive storylines emerge through which silence is given some social significance. The term 'storyline' is one that I borrow and adapt from Davies and Harré's (1990) paper on discursive positioning, as I discuss further in Chapter 4. The three storylines offer a range of discursive resources connected to social categories which set up taken-for-granted relationships and relational obligations, and in each storyline the function of communication is underpinned by a different relational logic:

- a storyline of interpersonal relationship management, in which other project group members are conceptualised as unique individuals, with different personalities, characteristics, interests and foibles - a logic of relating;
- a storyline of representation and responsibility, in which the relationship with project group members is based on responsibilities and duties derived from organisational membership and role - a logic of representing; and
- a storyline of pragmatic action and influence, in which the relationship with project group members is based on a consideration of instrumentality - a logic of doing.

Silence becomes a concept inherently associated with the navigation and management of social relationships. The positioning work that draws on the social categories, relationships and obligations in the storylines tends to provide positive narratives of capability, effectiveness and professionalism, with the underlying premise often that silence is proposed as a way to develop and sustain (and minimise damage to or difficulty within) important relationships and alliances. This is a radically different premise than that which appears in much of the OB literature where silence tends to be conceptualised as a damaging phenomenon that deprives managers or group members of useful information, constructive challenge or forewarning about future problems.

1.3.2 A re-examination of the phenomenon (phenomena) of silence

While the first research question uses previous OB research to compare and contrast the discourse generated in this study, in the second question I re-engage more directly with the literature in order to respond to recent calls that constructs still require clarification and development (Brinsfield, 2014) and that a better integration

is needed across various streams of research in organisation and management studies (Greenberg and Edwards, 2009; Wilkinson et al., 2014a). It is silence defined as a conscious withholding of ideas, suggestions, concerns or opinions (Morrison, 2011) that has tended to be most high-profile in the OB literature, with significant theoretical and empirical attention paid to the illocutionary (Austin, 1975/1962) motivations of individuals for such withholding. Yet I suggest that the ontological nature of this withholding has tended to be overlooked in empirical terms. It is possibly because of this that the relationship between silence and voice has become contested: because researchers may actually be confounding and aggregating slightly different concepts within the term silence, for instance, a conscious act of withholding and an absence of doing.

I argue that it is useful to consider what a more precise definition of an *act of withholding* as a situated social act could offer to an understanding of the concept of silence and the relationship between silence and voice in organising processes. What I mean by this is to highlight the issue of temporality and embodiment in communication processes. When a dialogic model of communication is used to examine the idea of an act of withholding within ethnographic research over time, a range of slightly different forms of silence emerge in social interaction. Recognising this range of forms may help to provide some clarity for some of the current debates for OB researchers, and in future may provide some means of joining up and integrating the work on silence and voice across the wider field of organisation and management studies.

1.4 The significant research contribution of the thesis

The significant research contribution that I make is to offer an empirical, ethnographic study of silence as a temporal and embodied phenomenon in the mundane processes of social interaction between the members of an inter-organisational project group. The study provides for a 'radically reflexive' (Cunliffe, 2003) perspective that offers the different voices of the participants involved, including my own; analyses participants' discursive constructions of their own practice of silence; but also steps back from these constructions to review the unfolding processes of social interaction to show how different forms of silence emerge over time in relation to the discourse. The theoretical perspective and methodological design, which attend to my own reflexive involvement in the social interaction, is crucial to this contribution.

1.5 The research setting: silence within an inter-organisational project group

My focus is on six members of a temporary inter-organisational project group in the UK and the emergent social processes by which individuals come to interpret each other, and understand the requirements to speak up or stay silent about certain topics, as they engage in working together for the first time. This setting provides a study of a social context where it was not self-evident what needed to be discussed nor how project delivery should be organised. I offer an analysis of a situation in which employees engaged across organisational boundaries and in which there were shifting identities and allegiances. Project group members were negotiating diffuse and ambiguous sets of responsibilities and job roles outside of clear organisational procedures and structures. While a few of the members had worked together

previously on other projects, most had not. Thus, they were learning about each other as well as about the project requirements.

There were three organisations represented in the project group: a County Council (a strategic local authority), a City Council (a local authority with smaller geographical remit), and a university. The project group can be characterised as a meeting point between two different professional groups within a common socio-cultural context: one group connected to local government work and one group connected to academic research. The project group members could all be described as members of white-collar professions, British-based, native English-speaking, white-skinned, with an age range of roughly early 30s to early 50s. However, it is not these professional groups or cultural identities *per se* that I seek to analyse. The unit of analysis is essentially the embedded and localised account of silence rather than variables associated with the individual or the group.

In the thesis, I deliberately use the term project *group* rather than project *team* in order to suggest a looser structure of roles and relationships than the word *team* might otherwise convey (Casey, 1985; Wageman, Gardner and Mortensen, 2012). My original understanding of a joint task in which all project group members were involved was challenged during the unfolding process of fieldwork. Instead, there emerged two different elements of work: a short-term project being led by the university members of the group, and a longer-term project associated with the council group. In the words of one of the project group members, Martin:⁵

⁵ Chapter 5 describes the project group participants in more detail.

'I don't think there *was* such a thing as a group [...] There was a group of individuals some of whom had common goals who met together ... but in terms of a group it had no existence beyond the point at which it *met*.'

The thesis explores the notion of silence within a fragile context of enacted group membership, and in a particular situation where working together turned out not to be straightforward, where different viewpoints and professional practices were being navigated, and where such navigations were leading to conflict between the individual members in the group. What took centre stage was the issue of how silence became constructed in relation to multiple and contested interpretations of what was going on, and what was required in terms of sustaining different types of relationship.

1.6 Theoretical underpinning

There are two particular issues that required an intersubjective theoretical approach to be taken in this study. Firstly, there is clearly an epistemological and reflexive dilemma in the study of silence: if I accept that silence as a conscious withholding is a valid phenomenon to study (and I do), then I must accept that it may occur in the situation of my research interview as much as in any of the other situations which I am discussing with participants. Secondly (and not necessarily unrelated to the first point) participants' responses to my questions asking them to describe their silence sometimes required some interpretation to make sense of the response as coherent talk about the topic of silence. There were analytical hoops to jump through: my participants re-framed my question and provided an answer; my analysis then re-framed the participant's answer so that I could understand it as a response to my original question. This analytic process sometimes required a way to fill

hermeneutic gaps: to work out how the answer given might be meaningful, to hear how another topic might be being covered up in this talk, or to find indirect routes through which to join what seemed to be a non sequitur. The research is developed, therefore, through a consciously intersubjective (Cunliffe, 2011) methodology in which I play an active part.

There are a number of interweaving research traditions that are influential in the research design: the ethnography of communication, linguistic ethnography, autoethnography, and discursive psychology. As a means of joining these disparate elements together, I draw on the work of Mikhael Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984, 1986). My use of the term 'discourse' in this research relies on a Bakhtinian understanding of language as socially responsive, participatory and anticipatory (Shotter, 2008). In Bakhtin's dialogic theory, meaning in language is temporary, unstable and inherently connected to the local social situation in which utterances occur (Bakhtin, 1984; Todorov, 1984). His work has been associated with a more phenomenological perspective than other theorists on discourse, with a focus on the lived experience of individual subjectivity within social action (Cresswell, 2012; Gardiner, 1998). In the opposite way to which linguistic ethnographers have used ethnography to assist their understanding and analysis of moment-by-moment interaction, I use here some of the analytical tools of discourse analysis, specifically Davies and Harré's (1990) discursive positioning, to assist in operationalising Bakhtin's ideas of dialogic discourse within a piece of ethnographic research.

1.6.1 A glossary of terminology

From the interplay between the ethnographic and discursive theory and methodology described above comes the variety of terms and phrases that are used in the thesis. I present the terminology according to the sources of the various terms.

Firstly, for the description of the project group and its members, I borrow from Goffman's classic and arguably foundational descriptive terms for the analysis of social interaction (Goffman, 1959, 1974, 1983). The term **participants** is used to portray the project group members as individuals who may be constrained by the social setting but who use discursive resources actively rather than being cultural dopes (Garfinkel, 1967). I suggest that the term is loose enough to allow for their and my joint involvement in, and shaping of, the intersubjective research outputs while keeping a distinction between myself as the researcher and the project group members proper (Pink 2007, p.39). The study is ultimately my interpretation of the events and characters.

Goffman's term of **social interaction** is used in a rather general way to encompass the social setting and the activity which unfolds within it. In contrast, Bakhtin's term of **interplay** is used for more precise reference to a concrete set of conversational turns between two or more participants (myself included) within a specific social situation. I use the term interplay to refer to the linguistic and para-linguistic conversation of gestures (Mead, 1934), for instance within a project group meeting or in my post-meeting conversation with a participant.

I borrow from Bakhtin other terms too: the notion of heteroglossia, centripetal and centrifugal forces, polyphony, speech genre, and utterance (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984,

1986). In Morris' (1994) handbook reader of Bakhtin's writing, the glossary defines **heteroglossia** as:

'the conflict between centripetal and centrifugal, official and unofficial discourses within the same [...] language [and which] is also present [...] at the micro-linguistic scale' (p.248-9).

In this study, heteroglossia becomes a relevant term in relation to the distinction between the different discourses connected to the various organisations involved in the project and the tensions that emerge between different ways of seeing the world, through local authority and university practices and ideologies. The **centripetal** and **centrifugal forces** mentioned in the extract from Morris' handbook are proposed by Bakhtin to be in tension: the former is a stabilising and unifying force, the latter a destabilising and stratifying one (Bakhtin, 1981). Both forces together provide the dynamic nature of language and meaning in social life.

The term **utterance** is described in Morris' glossary as:

'any unit of language, from a single word to an entire 'text'. More importantly, however, an utterance [...] is not so much a purely linguistic concept, as the locus of encounter between my self-consciousness, my mind and the world with all its socio-historical meaning' (1994, p.251).

I use the term to denote how people interact in conversation in the project meetings, and as a means of discussing acts of withholding. I also use it to discuss the multiple ways in which words can be interpreted in order to compare transmission and dialogic models of communication, for which purpose I draw on the terminology of

Austin's speech act theory (Austin, 1975/1962), most specifically of **illocution** and **perlocution**.

I borrow from discursive psychology (Edwards, 2001/1997; Potter and Wetherall, 1987) the word **account** as the term applied to participants' storied talk in response to my questions about their silence. The word is used as a way of centring the research on the performative nature of the talk (Potter and Wetherall, 1987), rather than whether it is true or not, to show what resources are available through which silence can be sensibly discussed and understood. It draws attention to the situated nature of the talk as taking place within a particular moment, such that the variability of participants' discourse becomes not a difficulty but of interest. The word is also associated usefully with 'accounting for' activity, that is, with rationalisations of what may otherwise appear to be odd or difficult in some way (Potter and Wetherall, 1987, p.74). In my fieldwork, the idea of answering questions about the practice of silence seemed to take on a breaching (Garfinkel, 1967) quality of oddness that required participants to find some way to provide a sensible answer.

From the discursive positioning work of Davies and Harré, as defined in their 1990 paper, I take the terms **positioning** and **storylines**. Both of these strands of work emphasise the performative nature of discourse within social interaction. These are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Finally, I use the term **practice** rather than behaviour as a word to denote the actions that constitute a participant's own silence. It is difficult to find an apposite word which covers the range of *non*-communicative aspects that might be involved in such a concept, but what I intend by the word is to refer to a participant's discursive construction of their own actions in a situated context (whether those be actively

suppressing a comment, or not engaging in the conversation, and so on, both in a concrete situation as well as the patterning over time). I use the word **practice** instead of behaviour to make a distinction between the OB literature's perspective and the perspective developed here which proposes a less deterministic understanding of silence.⁶

1.7 Structure of the thesis

This introductory chapter is followed by two separate literature review chapters. The first of these elaborates and distinguishes between some of the many definitions of silence and voice in order to set out as clearly as possible what the focus of study is intended to be, but also to note some of the confusion that still exists in the OB literature about the concept of silence and some of the fuzzy relationships to other organisational and management bodies of literature. I also cover the more specific OB literature on speaking up and staying silent to show how the idea of silence as withholding has been discursively constructed as a social phenomenon. A second literature review chapter introduces and delineates between the transmission and dialogic models of communication in order to prepare the ground for the theoretical and methodological approach used in the thesis.

Chapter 4 sets out more detail on the research design, theoretical framework, the methodology and detailed methods for data generation and analysis, as well as the processes of transcription, writing and representation, and ethics.

After this, a short Chapter 5 introduces the empirical research setting and the characters of the project group. It is followed by four chapters of empirical data generated from ethnographic fieldwork, recordings of interviews with participants

⁶ See for instance the discussion in Czarniawska (2008).

and of project group meetings. Each of these data chapters, Chapters 6 to 9, seeks to illustrate some of the complexity of silence as an embedded phenomenon. Each chapter is built around a different substantive focus, either a metaphorical or literal 'agenda item': the project's beginning, a workshop that the university team were organising, some community talks that the County Council officers were organising; and the stage-end of the project and the handover of work from the university to the council. The use of this 'agenda item' device is a means by which to bring various texts into discussion together to show some of the complexity of silence in social interaction.

Chapter 10 then follows as a discussion chapter for the first research question, in which I elaborate the three storylines developed from analysing participants' accounts of silence over time. I show how the storylines compare and contrast to some of the OB literature on silence, and how they help to conceptualise silence as a relational phenomenon in everyday processes of project delivery. Chapter 11 returns to the literature in Chapter 2 to discuss the second research question and the implications of using a Bakhtinian dialogic approach in ethnographic research to unpack the notion of silence. A final Chapter 12 provides some short concluding comments, both on lessons learnt as a novice researcher and thoughts on directions for future research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW - SILENCE

One of the issues encountered in my research was the need to unpack some of the assumptions about what constitutes silence. This literature review chapter therefore starts with a fairly broad-brush coverage of the term 'silence' in order to clarify the focus of my study by means of some contrasts. While not offering a comprehensive dictionary entry of meanings, I aim to establish some distinctions between different phenomena labelled as silence: I want to separate out and bracket some of the uses of the word as distinct from my main interest in this thesis. The distinctions that I make are between these three sets of binary concepts:

- silence (acoustic) - sound;
- silence (absence) - presence; and
- silence (withholding) - voice (speaking up).

I discuss each of these briefly in turn to show how silence takes on very different ontological form in each. It was the latter form of silence - as withholding - that informed my original research design. It is also this form of silence that many organisational behaviour (OB) researchers state that they are interested in solving, to encourage people to speak up instead of staying silent. It is important to note, however, that some of the distinctions and ideas that I bracket as *not* the focus of study come back into the discussion later, as they become relevant to my interpretation of withholding. Thus, one of the reasons for the discussion in this chapter of other ways of understanding silence is to set the scene for the discussion in Chapter 11 about the various forms of silence that emerge in the empirical material across Chapters 6 to 9. My intention here is to show how slightly different ideas about silence and voice become intertwined, in order later to show how more

focus on temporality and embodiment may help to clarify some of the constructs and the theoretical relationships between them.

The first broad-brush section of the literature review is followed by a more specific review of the literature on silence as withholding/not speaking up, to show how this concept of silence has been discursively constructed so far. This review covers the volume of work that uses a positivist perspective and quantitative methodology as well as the much sparser literature that takes a discursive, social constructionist perspective. Although the OB research has usually started from a very different type of research question than that specified in my research, there are nevertheless some similar underlying references, for instance to some of the reasons given for silence and the types of relationships implicated, as well as some differences that might be expected given the very different research context in which my study was conducted. Therefore this more focused review section provides a comparative baseline for Chapter 10 which examines participants' discursive constructions of their practice of silence.

2.1 Binary opposition: silence - sound

To start with the more expansive review of the different ways in which silence has been conceptualised, the first binary distinction is an acoustic phenomenon within social interaction, to emphasise the contrast between *no noise*⁷ and *communication*. The phenomenon is a form of silence that can be measured in units of time, and has been researched in the fields of sociolinguistics (Kurzon, 1997, 2007; Saville-Troike, 1985; Tannen, 1985) and the ethnography of communication (Basso, 1970). Saville-

⁷ Or at least no communicative noise: see Saville-Troike (1985) for much more nuanced distinctions than is possible or required here between noise (bird song, traffic noise, etc) and conversationally significant sounds of speech.

Troike (1985) notes that there are varied social and cultural norms about the expectations of acoustic silence: how much silence, by whom, in what type of communicative event.⁸ She suggests that silence is an integral element of communication but one that often only invites interpretation when it is *unexpected*; and that silence as a communicative element is more ambiguous and more open to interpretation than verbal language.⁹ She also notes that an acoustic form of silence may be analysed within different frameworks: as an element of social interaction in general - the conversation has fallen silent, no-one is speaking - or in relation to the individual - while others may be talking, at least one person is not, and their silence becomes meaningful. Such analytical distinctions are, for instance, used in group facilitation techniques to judge whether topics of conversation have been exhausted, or whether particular individuals have become disengaged and isolated from the group discussion.

This acoustic silence has been incorporated as an analytic feature within the theoretical research framework of conversation analysis (CA) (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998; Wooffitt, 2001) where features of turn-taking, overlapping and pauses in conversation during transitions between speakers are deemed significant for how members produce social order (Scollon, 1985; Wooffit, 2001, p.87). Even short hesitations and pauses within a conversation can be interpreted as meaningful, for instance as an indication of a refusal of a preferred response (Kitzinger and Frith, 2001/1999). The importance of this form of silence for my study is in recognising its relevance to how conversation develops in moment-by-moment processes of

⁸ For instance, expectations of silence in Quaker meetings are different than in other Christian church services, and different again in other non-religious situations of daily life (Kurzon, 2011).

⁹ Johannesen (1974), for instance, lists twenty 'potential meanings' that might be interpreted for another's acoustic silence (the person does not want to talk; lacks sufficient information to do so; is in the process of thinking what to say next; is being polite; or impolite; and so on).

social interplay, but also to how one person's non-verbalisation may lead to certain interpretations made by others about the significance of that silence.

2.2 Binary opposition: absence - presence

Kurzon (2007) describes 'thematic silence' as an absence of topic or theme. That is, it is not a matter of acoustic silence - there is still a text: people are talking - but rather a topic or theme is missing from that text. Similar to the silence-sound opposition, the absence-presence opposition has had impact in certain areas of organisational discourse theory and qualitative methodology (see Mazzei, 2003, 2004, 2007; Poland and Pederson, 1998; Ward and Winstanley, 2003) in terms of understanding the significance of what is absent and unsaid. Because these ideas become implicitly interwoven into the OB literature and come to feature in my study, I spend a little time on this point.

Mazzei (2004) and Ward and Winstanley (2003) both draw on Derrida's deconstructionist work to analyse the significance of what is *not said*, the meaning of which is attributed by what *is* said, pointing out how absence is shaped by presence, in the same way as Gestalt theory points out the relevance of the ground to a research construction of the figure (Ward and Winstanley, 2003). Mazzei uses the idea of a 'muffled sub-text' (2003, p.355) to research the significance of what is left unsaid. Her point is that silence is an integral part of a text, and that by using what she calls a 'problematic of silence', which notes what is included in a worldview and what is left out of it, it is possible to 'listen to ourselves listening' in a way that 'encourages an openness to that which cannot be thought in the current context' (2007, p.634). Through her analytic strategy of listening to conversations and noting what is *not* said, she develops the discursive significance of the voices contained within *polite*

silences, where conversation changes in order to skirt around a possibly offending remark; within *privileged* silences, where the validity of topics or statements are questioned;¹⁰ and within *veiled* silences, where people answer a different question than that which she asked.

Morison and Macleod (2014, p.15) use the tools of reflexivity and the CA-derived notion of trouble and repair in interview data to develop Mazzei's idea of veiled silences, which they define as moments where a participant's spoken 'noise' veils an inability or unwillingness to talk about a potentially sensitive or confidential topic. The silence here is conceptualised by the authors not necessarily as a conscious individual choice to stay silent (although that might be the case) but as an outcome of discursive processes. Morison and Macleod propose that the significance of such veiled silences is that they mask, and thus perpetuate, normative frameworks of what is taken for granted. Their paper, for instance, focuses on their research into men's role in decision-making about having children, to underscore how the trouble encountered in answering such questions highlights a normative understanding of a heterosexual sequence of life events in which childbearing becomes an automatic activity that needs no conscious decision-making. The authors argue that understanding moments of trouble and repair - how, in their case, men provided perplexed responses to their questions - and investigating through reflexivity how the interview develops, allows these normative frameworks to be better understood despite an absence of discourse directly about the topic.

An understanding of silence within a binary opposition of absence/presence also embraces the idea of absence as exclusion in relation to the representation of

¹⁰ In Mazzei's research on race and education, this was based on participants being white-skinned and not perceiving this as bestowing any privileged status.

interests (Gray and Schruijer, 2012) or diversity management in human resource management (Cullinane and Donaghey, 2014; Syed, 2014).¹¹ Absence in this sense becomes connected to capital 'd' Discourse (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000, p.1127) power relations and the lack of resource to make oneself heard due to a discursive regime's normalising of particular interests and ways of understanding the world (Lukes, 1974). Silence has been described within critical commentaries on exclusionary practices, for instance, connected to gender (Piderit and Ashford, 2003), race (Bell et al., 2003; Fricker, 2012), and lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender (LGBT) identity (e.g. Bell et al., 2011; Bowen and Blackmon, 2003; Creed, 2003). Fricker (2012) points to the problematic nature of how utterances are heard in the context of institutional racism, in which the statements of people in certain demographic categories (young, black men) are perceived by, and responded to, in particular perlocutionary patterns by others within other categories (members of the police force) with more discursive power. Jacobson (1995) similarly discusses the idea of 'illocutionary disablement' in relation to feminist arguments about sexual consent, and how certain conditions of understanding are needed in order to secure a particular meaning. In this understanding of silence as absence, there is a *silencing* of others although the agency involved in such silencing is not clear-cut, as Brown and Coupland (2005) note in their Foucauldian analysis of new graduate employees' talk about the pressures they feel to remain silent.

¹¹ In this sense, silence is often identified as an opposite of voice conceptualised as an active presence or influence. This definition of voice follows the more critical perspective of authors like Cullinane and Donaghey (2014) in which attention is brought to the question of whose voice is influential and whose is missing from organisational decision-making and participative processes, and which notices the differentiation and exclusion of particular groups or categories in terms of relative power and influence.

2.3 Binary opposition (or not?): silence - voice

The third binary opposition compares silence to *voice*. There are of course a number of different definitions of voice¹² as well as silence, but the term as I use it here is in the communicative sense: voice as contributing information, opinions, ideas, or concerns (Milliken, Morrison and Hewlin, 2003; Morrison, 2011).¹³ While the variety of definitions of voice may seem problematic as a way of discussing the equally various definitions of silence, I consider it useful, and indeed necessary, given that it is a connection made in much of the organisational literature on silence. Thus, tracing the associations made between the two terms can help to show how some of the ambiguity about silence may have arisen.

I start, below, by discussing some of the definitions that have been offered for *voice* in a communicative context in order to show how the realist, objectivist ontology that underpins this work has provoked debate about the ontological form of silence and about the relationship between silence and voice. What I want to show is that in the OB literature the idea of withholding in conversation is often not clearly delineated, and moves between being conceptualised as a bounded act of withholding, a more general state of absence of communication, and a lack of being involved or active. While this lack of delineation about the idea of withholding may be less problematic when the focus of research is actually the phenomenon of

¹² One meaning of voice is introduced in footnote 11 above (page 33).

¹³ Voice and silence are also used as terms in the fields of human resource management (e.g. Syed, 2014) and industrial and employee relations, where structures of employee participation and representation are conceptualised, such as in union bargaining systems, and through which managerial or employee interests are delineated and negotiated (e.g. Cullinane and Donaghey, 2014; Wilkinson and Fay, 2011). I do not intend to cover this literature in depth since I consider it too far removed from the substantive focus on communication in this thesis, although I note some of its implications over the following few pages.

speaking up, it becomes more difficult when the focus is on the phenomenon of silence.

In her review of the organisational behaviour literature on employee voice, the definition which Elizabeth Morrison (2011, p.375) offers as an 'integrated conceptualization' of voice is:

'the discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns or opinions about work-related issues with the intent to improve organisational or unit functioning'.

There are two particular points to note in Morrison's definition. Firstly, voice is not simply equivalent to talk or conversation, therefore it cannot be assessed simply by the amount that employees communicate, either through talk or other modes. The term focuses on the *content* of the idea, information or opinion; how voice is actually expressed can vary - the actual words used, to whom it is spoken. Secondly, it assumes a particular motivation: to improve the task (as opposed to, for instance, a motive of denigrating someone else's idea or prevaricating and stalling for time). Indeed, Morrison and Milliken (2000) point out that one does not want too much voice, only the right amount and the right kind. Outside of these parameters for voice, the message seems to be that employees can please stay silent: it is, as Cullinane and Donaghey (2014) point out, a particular managerialist perspective on voice in which the interests of the organisation and its managers are conflated.

Morrison's definition of voice, as intentional, improvement-oriented communicative behaviour, prompts a comparison to other definitions of voice and related concepts. Much of the work on voice builds on Hirschman's (1970) model of exit, voice and loyalty as the theoretical basis (see for instance Burris, 2012; LePine and Van Dyne,

1998; Morrison and Milliken, 2000), where the definition of voice is 'any attempt at all to change rather than to escape from an objectionable state of affairs' (Hirschman, 1970, p.30). Voice has been seen as improvement-oriented (Morrison, 2011; Zhou and George, 2001) but also associated with complaint (Hirschman, 1970), dissent (De Dreu et al., 2000; Kassing, 2002), challenging the status quo (LePine and Van Dyne, 1998), issue selling (Dutton et al., 2001) and reporting organisational injustice (Pinder and Harlos, 2001). Research has been built around constructs relating to individual motive: antecedents for prosocial voice (Burris, Detert and Romney, 2013) or promotive versus prohibitive voice (Liang, Farh and Farh, 2012); how managers respond to challenging versus supportive ways of speaking up (Burris, 2012). Burris's (2012) paper recognises that different styles and tone of communication can have different managerial responses and outcomes. However, he does not develop these points or the implication that perhaps employees' intentions may be misunderstood by managers.

While there has been a move within OB research to become ever more precise about the construct of voice that is being used, Gruman and Saks (2014, p.456) note that this has now led to 'confusion in the field' in relation to how different constructs might relate to each other. Perhaps more confusingly, however, while an act of speaking up, in whatever manifestation, can at least be recorded in social interaction, its opposite may be even less clear. Morrison (2011) notes various disagreements in the organisational behaviour literature about the relationship between silence and voice. Some authors argue that the two are different sides of the same coin, in that 'a high level of [voice] implies a low level of [silence]' (Morrison, 2011, p.380; see also Ashford, Sutcliffe and Christianson, 2009) while others argue that they should be

treated as 'separate, multidimensional constructs' (Van Dyne, Ang and Botero, 2003, p.1359).

In an attempt to bring together the array of related and overlapping ideas and theories and to generate an integrative approach to the topic, Brinsfield et al. (2009, p.4) uses a more general definition to those referred to above, both of voice, as 'the expression of ideas, information, opinions or concerns', and of silence, as 'withholding them', and suggests three key features by means of which future research could integrate and clarify the different forms of voice and silence. These three key features, summarised by Gruman and Saks (2014), are:

- content (what is, or is not, being said?),
- target (to whom is the message (not) being directed?), and
- motive (what is the intent of the behaviour?).

There have also been some attempts to bridge the even wider gap between OB and other disciplines on research on silence and voice, such as Wilkinson et al.'s (2014a) *Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*, in which a number of chapters are dedicated to silence. Brinsfield (2014), in one of these *Handbook* chapters, argues that despite the number of different concepts jostling for space,¹⁴ there is still a 'need to distinguish between different forms of silence' (Brinsfield, 2014, p.122).

To begin reviewing the notion of silence, and to illustrate some of the confusion about the concept that still exists in the literature despite - or perhaps because of - the attempts at integration, I start with the first sentence in the abstract of Morrison's (2011) comprehensive literature review:

¹⁴ His list includes: pluralistic ignorance, diffusion of responsibility, loyalty, the MUM effect, groupthink, spiral of silence, neglect, deaf ear syndrome, organisational silence, employee silence, and implicit voice theories.

'Within organisations, employees continually confront situations that put them face to face with the decision of whether to speak up (i.e. voice) or remain silent when they have potentially useful information or ideas.'

(Morrison, 2011, p.373)

That is, what she highlights is the behaviour of an individual caught in a situation in which s/he might communicate with others. The focus in the sentence above is on the moment in which a choice to speak up or to stay silent is being made. Either a thought is expressed or withheld: there is silence or voice. Morrison then defines *employee silence* as:

'the conscious withholding of information, suggestions, ideas, questions, or concerns about potentially important work- or organisation-related issues from persons who might be able to take action to address those issues'

(Morrison, 2011, p.377).

Despite the apparently simple initial binary opposition between speaking up or staying silent as a choice of action in a particular moment, there is here a shift away from that particular moment and choice to a more indeterminate state of withholding. The silence now is not defined necessarily as a discrete act but becomes a gerund, of withholding, referring to action (if indeed, 'action' is a reasonable description) of remaining silent that may continue to happen over a period of time. For instance, Morrison and Milliken's (2000) notion of *organisational silence* involves a conceptualisation of employees *remaining* silent over time rather than speaking up to bring an issue to the attention of managers. (I discuss their work further in Section 2.9 below.)

Perhaps the most detailed paper on both the generation and breaking of silence is Pinder and Harlos' (2001) paper, in which they define *employee silence* as:

'the withholding of any form of genuine expression about the individual's behavioral, cognitive and/or affective evaluations of his or her organisational circumstances to persons who are perceived to be capable of effecting change or redress. By our definition, any communication that: (1) does not reflect a desire to alter circumstances, or that (2) is not directed to persons perceived as capable of ameliorating those circumstances does not comprise an attempt to break silence.' (their italics) (Pinder and Harlos, 2001, p.334)

Pinder and Harlos are writing specifically on situations of perceived organisational injustice and the conditions under which employees will report such matters, and this needs to be noted: their paper rests on the idea of whether employees believe something *should* be said and whether they feel it *can* be said (p.347). One of the implications that they note of their definition is that:

'silence is a dynamic process that moves and morphs in response to a variety of individual and situational factors' (2001, p.334).

Silence is now depicted as a 'dynamic' process over time in which the employee may or may not 'attempt to break silence' through particular communication to specific persons. They propose furthermore that silence encompasses a 'range of feelings, thoughts and actions' (p.334). Despite the specific context of their work pertaining to organisational injustice, Pinder and Harlos' descriptions of *acquiescent* and *quiescent* silence behaviour have been taken up more widely in the silence literature, and therefore it is worthwhile exploring the concepts in more detail. Their

distinction between these two forms of behaviour rests on the degree of acceptance of organisational events and conditions.¹⁵ The concept of quiescence is proposed as a conscious and uncomfortable state in which the individual is aware of possible alternative scenarios and options for action to try and achieve those scenarios but does not engage in such action. They suggest that acquiescence, on the other hand, is a deeper state of silence in which the individual has given up hope of improvement, takes the current situation for granted, and becomes oblivious to alternatives. Thus it takes more to motivate a breaking of silence from acquiescent states.

Pinder and Harlos' (2001) distinction between acquiescence and quiescence has been developed by Van Dyne, Ang and Botero (2003) into what has become a frequently-cited theoretical typology of silence and voice. It is perhaps at this point that the phenomenologically distinctive descriptions in Pinder and Harlos' paper start to become weakened, as the two theoretical forms described in their paper are taken out of context and applied more widely within a framework which, like for voice, prioritises the individual motive. Van Dyne, Ang and Botero argue that:

'the key feature that differentiates silence and voice is not the presence or absence of speaking up, but the actor's motivation to *withhold versus express ideas, information, and opinions* about work-related improvements' (2003, p.1360: their italics)

What they argue here, importantly, is that people can be talking about one topic and withholding about another, and they seek to investigate why that might occur by

¹⁵ They develop the phenomenological difference between two behaviours along eight dimensions: voluntariness, consciousness, acceptance, stress level, awareness of alternatives, propensity to voice, propensity to exit, dominant emotions. For reasons of space, I do not go into further detail about these dimensions here.

suggesting different possible motivations. Their theoretical typology starts with the basic distinction between *passive* (disengaged, acquiescent) and *proactive* motivations, with further distinctions in the proactive motivation to distinguish *defensive* (self-protecting) and *prosocial* (other-protecting) motivations for both silence and voice. Thus, they develop a matrix in which they identify three voice behaviours and three silence behaviours that correspond to different employee motivations. They give examples in each category of what withholding might consist of:

- for acquiescent silence: withholding thoughts because 'employees believe they don't make a difference' and hence are 'not willing to exert the effort to speak up, get involved or attempt to change the situation' (p.1366);
- for defensive silence: withholding based on 'fear that expression of ideas is personally risky [...] [or] omitting facts about problems that should be corrected in order to protect the self [...] based on fear of being held responsible for the problem' (p.1367); and
- for prosocial silence: 'withholding information because it is confidential [...], not communicating personal information about others inappropriately, and not breaking confidences' (p.1368).

Their work thus provides a place for a more positive form of silence connected to a prosocial motivation, as well as a more negative form of voice (acquiescent voice) as I will return to below.

However, there seems to be a number of issues outstanding with the typology as defined in their (2003) paper. Firstly, the authors make it very clear that they are referring to situations in which employees engage in conscious withholding, rather

than simply having nothing to contribute. However, they then proceed to discuss how *observers* may make sense of this withholding and the 'overt cues' of silence, as if withholding is observable or somehow connected to acoustic silence or absence despite their earlier insistence that it is not simply an absence of speaking up.¹⁶ Moreover, they identify that some forms of silence behaviour require 'effort' but do not develop this line of thinking further, suggesting that the different experiential and social aspects of these different types of silence are not yet fully elaborated. A number of authors have used certain categories in Van Dyne, Ang and Botero's typology as the basis of their research (see Gruman and Sacks, 2014; Knoll and Van Dick, 2013; Perkins, 2014; Wang and Hsien, 2012) but there has still been little development of what the behaviour of silence actually entails as a specific phenomenological experience within any of these categories. Fletcher and Watson (2007) point out that Van Dyne, Ang and Botero's (2003) construction of either/or motivational categories outlines the phenomena of silence and voice in rather more clear terms than might be experienced by people in practice. They provide an example of an empirical study that prioritises the patterning of social relations to illustrate their point that a language of motives is less helpful than a language of relational processes in the study of silence. They then suggest that Van Dyne, Ang and Botero's 'types' of silence may in fact be better described instead as 'dimensions' of silence (Fletcher and Watson, 2007, p.171). Fletcher and Watson's discussion in effect raises missing issues of temporality and change from Van Dyne, Ang and Botero's paper. Van Dyne, Ang and Botero connect motivation with particular

¹⁶ For instance, they suggest that 'an absence of complaints' might count as an example of a prosocial form of silence. They have used person-centred criteria (LePine and Van Dyne, 1998) up until this point, and it is not clear how this now should be read: should an 'absence of complaints' be associated with the situation, as a commentary on the conversational content (a presence/absence opposition), or perhaps the perlocutionary understanding of the hearer, as recognising the lack of complaining by the withholder (a silence/sound opposition connected to that individual)?

feelings: feeling threatened, feeling fear (defensive silence/voice), feeling resigned, feeling action is futile (acquiescent silence/voice), feeling altruistic (prosocial silence/voice). The implications of any instability or temporality of such emotive feeling - that is, to what extent such feelings are connected to a fleeting moment of social interaction or are more enduring relational configurations - are not yet developed but may be significant for the concept of silence. George's (2010) discussion, from an employee engagement perspective, of the significance and importance of fluctuations in levels of engagement might provide a useful comparison in this regard. However, the issue of temporality remains as yet unaddressed.

The idea of acquiescent voice used by Van Dyne, Ang and Botero (2003) crops up in another discussion which is worth noting, since it introduces a slightly different take again on the idea of silence. Morrison (2011) takes issue with their category of acquiescent voice because, she argues, it does not fulfil her criteria for voice being improvement-oriented. Gruman and Saks (2014), however, support Van Dyne, Ang and Botero's category, and suggest that it has been under-appreciated in discussions about employee engagement. They propose a distinction between voice *behaviour* (what they define simply as 'speaking-up behaviour', and what arguably might be seen just as talk or communication) and voice *engagement*, where the latter is defined as 'the extent to which employees fully employ and express their true selves when they engage in voice behaviour' (Gruman and Saks, 2014, p.471). Within this framework, they argue that the idea of acquiescent voice is important to seek to understand because of the low quality of propositional content that such voice entails. What this suggests is that, not only may employees be speaking up about one issue and withholding about another - as Van Dyne, Ang and Botero (2003) note

- but also employees may be speaking up about an issue but not really trying. The logical conclusion is that there is a kind of silence here that becomes defined by this absence of effort, as voice when someone is just going through the motions, in a 'facade of conformity' (Bies, 2009, p.167), that does not bring to light points that may be important, or that does not really engage with the creative process of dialogue.

Meanwhile, in other typologies other forms of silence have been developed that are not explicitly associated with individual, agentic motivation. In the organisational learning literature, for instance, Blackman and Sadler-Smith's (2009) paper describes a wider range of ideas about the nature of silence by highlighting how silence may be understood based on different ways of knowing: from silent tacit (ineffable, cannot be spoken) forms of knowledge, preconscious forms of knowledge (might be spoken once attention is triggered) to explicit forms of knowledge that are silenced (will not be spoken) due either to an internal (choosing not to) or external (being repressed) locus of power. Blackman and Sadler-Smith's (2009) taxonomy also hints at other ways in which silence has been conceptualised in a more critical framework. Cullinane and Donaghey (2014), for instance, critique Morrison's (2011) managerialist perspective on silence, as employees not speaking up with useful information, by proposing that the phenomenon of silence can also be conceptualised as a lack of managerial *response* to issues that are voiced by employees - leading to the deaf ear syndrome that Harlos (2001) describes - and as a lack of managerial *interest* in what employees have to contribute (Charlwood, 2006; Donaghey et al., 2011; Willman, Bryson and, Gomez, 2006). Their point, which moves the debate into the disciplines of industrial relations and human resource management, expands

the range of source points from which slightly different forms of silence are generated in the unfolding processes of social interaction.

Having elaborated the range of ontological forms associated with the term *silence*, I turn to a more specific review of silence, its causes and consequences, to provide a discursive baseline against which to compare the data in this thesis, in order to show how the members of the inter-organisational project group constructed silence in ways that were similar to, or different from, the discourse in other research papers. In this part of the literature review, I try to concentrate on the literature that *specifically* addresses the topic of silence rather than the literature that has voice as its research focus and in which silence emerges simply as a description of an alternative, opposite behaviour. However, this is quite a hard task given that much of the literature starts with a focus on voice! Where I draw on the voice-focused material, I make an explicit reference to this being the case. Additionally, while some research has distinguished between silence in situations of upwards communication to managers (see for instance Detert and Burris, 2007; Detert and Trevino, 2010; Morrison and Milliken, 2000) and horizontal communication to peers in groups or teams (see LePine and Van Dyne, 1998; Morrison, Wheeler-Smith and Kamdar, 2011), much of the literature does not make such a clear distinction. Therefore, I have included both sets of literature in order to draw out some of the general discursive features. Where authors are specific about the directionality of silence behaviour, I note this in the text.

2.4 Consequences of silence

One of the most dominant themes in the organisational literature is the promotion of voice over silence: there is far less emphasis on the idea that speaking up may be

problematic,¹⁷ or that the consequences of silence may be beneficial and worthy of promotion, than vice versa. This is despite acknowledging that in some circumstances silence may not only be advisable but positively beneficial (Bies, 2009): when the issue is not of sufficient priority to be raised (Perlow and Williams, 2003), when the silence is prosocial (Van Dyne, Ang and Botero, 2003), when increasing the amount of employee voice may be hard for managers to cope with (Morrison and Milliken, 2000).

Silence is often portrayed as a behaviour that needs addressing for the good of the company (Perlow and Williams, 2003), the group (Janis, 1972) or team (Morrison, Wheeler-Smith and Kamdar, 2011) since it has damaging consequences. The first consequence often mentioned is that it deprives others (usually managers) of information that is necessary to create a more effective and competitive organisation (Detert and Trevino, 2010; Detert and Burris, 2007; Milliken, Morrison and Hewlin, 2003; Ryan and Oestreich, 1998; Tangirala and Ramanujam, 2008), for positive organisational learning (Argyris, 1990; Milliken and Lam, 2009), and/or to correct organisational problems (Pinder and Harlos, 2001). The assumption is that employees' individual involvement in day-to-day minutiae of operational work will alert them to particular issues, inefficiencies, problems and solutions which, if reported and shared, may enable the organisation or group to respond appropriately (Morrison and Milliken, 2000; Pinder and Harlos, 2001; Ryan and Oestreich, 1998; Vakola and Bouradas, 2005). The work situation conjured up is one where the experiences of work are different enough, from one person or category of worker to the next, to generate new information and ideas that might be unknown and therefore

¹⁷ To put it bluntly, the literature seems to have focused on the idea of finding ways to encourage people to speak up rather than to encourage people to shut up. Of course, it might be argued that this is simply a different set of literature, related to group facilitation for instance.

worthy of communication, and where subordinate employees are not automatically included in decision-making by managers. There is an interesting tendency which Milliken and Lam (2009, p.241) point out: to describe employees as keeping silent, with somewhat devious overtones, whereas managers are described as using discretion about the information they filter upwards to their superiors. While issue-selling, for instance, may be part of managerial behaviour (Dutton and Ashford, 1993; Dutton et al., 2001; Dutton et al., 2002), a similar strategic approach in more junior staff is looked on with more suspicion in the literature.

The second consequence of silence derives from the idea that where voice acts as challenge, criticism or dissent, it is considered to lead to better decision-making and hence better substantive outcomes (De Dreu et al., 2000) through preventing a premature movement to consensus and a more thorough examination of underlying assumptions (De Dreu and West, 2001; Janis, 1972). Silence therefore deprives groups of the necessary challenge to produce such robust decision-making. When voice is conceptualised as a catalyst for new ideas and novel ways of doing things (Nemeth and Goncalo, 2011; Zhou and George, 2001), then silence reduces creativity and innovation, and impacts upon processes of change and learning (Argyris, 1990, 1991, 1994; Gambarotto and Cammozzo, 2010). Such issues have been particularly emphasised in situations of collaboration across work teams or organisations (Edmondson, 2003; Gray and Schruijer, 2012). It is the diversity of views that becomes the focus, the blending of which produces new perspectives and brings new ways of understanding to old or habitual ways of thinking (Bechky, 2003; Tsoukas, 2009).

A third consequence of silence is that it is conceptualised to have a negative impact on the person withholding, and leads to demoralised and disempowered employees

(Bowen and Blackmon, 2003; Kahn, 2010). Voice defined in terms of having one's views considered (Shapiro, 1993) and listened to (Harlos, 2001) has been suggested to lead to a sense of organisational and procedural justice (Lind and Kulik, 2009; Shapiro, 1993) and to greater employee engagement (Beugré, 2010). Nevertheless, the literature presents a slightly complicated picture. For instance, Beugré (2010) suggests that these consequences may only apply in certain situations, for instance where employees *expect* to be able to participate, and where they *value* doing so. Furthermore, Harlos (2001), in her discussion of the deaf ear syndrome, notes demoralisation may also be caused by an employee's voice being ignored by managers. Knoll and Van Dick (2013) note that people evaluated silence as good or bad, and experience it as comfortable or uncomfortable, according to whether they feel that something should be said or not, a perspective also taken by Pinder and Harlos (2001).

2.5 Employees' stories about their silence

Milliken, Morrison and Hewlin (2003) cite eight categories of issues about which employees do not feel comfortable speaking to their manager. Their starting point, then, is to connect voice and discomfort, with the alternative choice being to remain silent (and thus, presumably more comfortable). The objective of their study was to explore the 'cognitive map' of what employees in the US believe they can and cannot say according to an understanding of organisational norms. Interview respondents provided examples of the issues they had stayed silent about at work, when and

why.¹⁸ The commonest reason cited for silence was to avoid being labelled negatively and consequently damaging relationships.

Meanwhile, Detert, Burris and Harrison (2010) claim that certain pervasive 'myths', which they suggest managers may commonly hold about employees' silence behaviour, turn out to be challenged by what employees say they actually do. The myths include: if employees speak up about certain things, then they are not holding back about anything; that certain groups (women, non-professional staff) may be more likely to stay silent; and that employees only hold back due to fear and about big-ticket issues (that is, the kind of issues identified in Milliken, Morrison and Hewlin's (2003) study). The authors suggest that data from a North American census survey 'debunks' these myths: that employees take a more nuanced approach to silence (staying silent about *that* issue, in front of *that* person); and that reasons given for remaining silent refer more often to not wishing to waste time over everyday problems, in situations where speaking up is conceptualised as having no significant benefit but also no significant risk for the employee.

Detert and Edmondson (2011) discuss implicit voice theories that they identify in data collected across a number of qualitative and quantitative studies. They found that speaking up was also constructed not so much as risky but rather as sometimes inappropriate or out of place. While their paper refers explicitly to upward communication from employees to managers, it is worth noting the implicit voice theories to compare against my empirical data to follow. These theories include the idea that immediate line managers are a particularly important consideration in

¹⁸ Their list includes: concern about a colleague's or supervisor's performance; problems with organisational processes or performance and/or suggestions for improvement; concerns about pay or pay equity; disagreement with company policies or decisions; personal career issues or concerns; ethical or fairness issues (e.g. professional misconduct or discrimination); harassment or abuse; and conflict with a co-worker.

speaking up and that voice may be particularly challenging to them, since they are equated with the status quo and the responsibility for creating current organisational conditions; that speaking up may have negative career consequences; and that solid data and clearly developed, thought-through ideas are necessary before speaking up becomes advisable. Detert and Edmondson describe these implicit theories as deeply rooted subconscious belief structures that are developed through a mix of vicarious learning and previous experience which becomes generalised, and which trigger certain behavioural responses via environmental cues. They also suggest that *actual* behaviour may run counter to an implicit theory, particularly when an employee encounters stimuli that provoke strong emotions, such as anger, which may override the usual response. Both Detert and Edmondson (2011) and Detert, Burris and Harrison (2010) therefore point to the *discourse* of silence and voice being different than the actual *practice* of silence and voice.

The issues of risk and of appropriate behaviour often become implicitly interwoven in the literature on silence and voice, and underpin some of the differences in the literature between static understandings of silence, which emphasise correct performance (e.g. Bienefeld and Grote, 2012; Milliken, Morrison and Hewlin, 2003), and dynamic and fluid understandings, which emphasise potential to change (e.g. Detert and Burris, 2007; Edmondson, 2003). These play out in a number of ways in the literature, as I illustrate over the next few sections. In order to establish some groundwork around this thinking, I refer first to the work of two important authors in organisation studies who help to bring different perspectives to the study of silence within social situations: Chris Argyris from a cognitive psychology / organisational learning perspective, and Erving Goffman in terms of the interaction order and a sociological perspective.

2.6 Psychological and sociological perspectives: Argyris and Goffman

The difference between what people do and what they say they do, noted above, is reflected in Argyris's work. Argyris (1990, 1991) identifies a distinction between the cognitive models of action that individuals profess to using (espoused theories) and the models that people empirically use in social interaction (theories in use). The disparity between the two models, he argues - and more specifically, the *covering up* of the disparity: what he calls 'skilled incompetence' (Argyris, 1990, p.12ff) - leads to a failure to address the true causes of organisational problems, as individuals do not admit to what they are really thinking about a problem.

Argyris (1990, 1991, 1994) proposes that employees, particularly 'smart people' (Argyris, 1991) such as professionals who are used to being successful, avoid talking about topics that might be embarrassing or threatening, and that these topics therefore become undiscussable. Argyris (1991, 1994) identifies the role of embarrassment and self-protection as critical factors in this process. He suggests that a mix of psychologically-based defensive reasoning, which screens out criticism of an individual's own performance, and socially-based politeness norms leads to organisational defensive routines, and that these routines lead to a failure of organisational 'double-loop' learning (1990) and a failure to identify the fundamental basis of organisational problems. Argyris points out the difficulty of talking explicitly about the assumptions one makes, and the actions one takes, about face-saving work (Argyris, 1994, p.81) and how personal attributes of the other are inferred without testing the assumptions behind them.

Argyris' psychological notions of defensive routines and undiscussability can be compared and contrasted to Goffman's discussion of face (Goffman, 2003/1967).

From a sociological perspective, Goffman's dramaturgical ideas of impression management (1959) and face-work (2003/1967) cover similar ground to Argyris' organisational learning theory. Goffman (1959) proposes that individuals are compelled socially to withdraw from acts that might threaten his/her own face or that of others, and that participants share tacitly in the maintenance of face-saving work for themselves and each other in the performance of particular roles. There are certain topics of relevance and there are other topics that would break or transform the frame, which might embarrass one's interlocutors and inappropriately interfere with the lines that they are establishing for themselves: the latter topics therefore become inappropriate to discuss. Similarly, discreditable facts may need to be concealed in order to maintain one's own performance or to sustain certain fronts of the team to which one belongs.

While Goffman's theory contains arguably a rather static, ethnographic description of role, Argyris' theory is developed from his experience of consultancy work with senior executives in which the objective was to change how people behaved in these managerial roles. This influences how silence is constructed in their work: for Goffman, it is incorporated into a descriptive performance of roles, and he does not discuss how roles are learnt or how they (and thus, the silence) may change;¹⁹ nor does he construct silence as necessarily a problem. For Argyris, silence has negative consequences and is a more fluid phenomenon that can be changed given the right interventions.

¹⁹ For instance, see Potter and Wetherall (1987) and Simpson and Carroll's (2008) discussion of constructions of role identities as more fluid and temporary than the process of socialisation that is proposed in role theory.

2.7 Antecedent causes of silence

Research on the antecedents that affect the choice between silence or voice takes up a significant proportion of the relevant literature and largely becomes caught up in attempts to understand how to encourage people to speak up instead of staying silent. For instance, authors have searched for predictive patterns connected to antecedents of commitment (Tangirala and Ramanujam, 2008), loyalty (Olson-Buchanan and Boswell, 2002), felt obligation for constructive change (Liang, Farh and Farh, 2012), job satisfaction (Farrell, 1983; Withey and Cooper, 1989), and personality constructs such as self-monitoring (Premeaux and Bedeian, 2003). Morrison (2011) identifies two particularly common outcome-related variables affecting individual decisions to speak up or stay silent: perceived *safety* and perceived *efficacy* of voice. I use these concepts in the following two sections, to show how the literature implicitly constructs and implicates particular types of relationship in the phenomenon of silence.

2.7.1 'Perceived safety' and risks of speaking up

Morrison (2011, p.382) defines perceived safety of voice as:

'the individual's judgment about the risks or potential negative outcomes associated with speaking up.'

It is the response of the other that is at the core of the risk. Various authors have identified risks relating to individual image (Dutton and Ashford, 1993; Ashford, Sutcliffe and Christianson, 2009): being labelled as someone who is difficult to work with or as someone who is not a team player (Milliken, Morrison and Hewlin, 2003; Ryan and Oestreich, 1991), such that a fine line needs to be managed between being

heard as positive and improvement-oriented versus being heard as moaning, confrontational or self-interested (Milliken and Lam, 2009). The issue-selling literature notes similar difficulties in strategic calculations in relation to making one's point effectively versus managing one's reputation and losing future credibility (Dutton and Ashford, 1993; Dutton et al., 2001; Dutton et al., 2002). In situations of uncertainty and ambiguity, the cognitive calculation of risk includes judging the relevance of information: one might judge wrongly and end up wasting managers' time or become associated with failed causes (Milliken and Lam, 2009).

The psychological risks in group situations tend to be seen as originating in perceived differences between the individual self and others in the group (Milliken and Martins, 1996), the fear of standing out from the crowd and being in a minority (Bowen and Blackmon, 2003), and of potential exclusion or ostracism (Janis, 1972; Lustenberger and Williams, 2009). Janis' (1972) theory of groupthink suggests that the stronger the group cohesion, the less group members will want to risk speaking up. Too high a level of group cohesion can create the development of social norms that promote a desire to maintain friendly intragroup social relations rather than to debate and review the range of options available. Gray and Schruijer (2012) use the psychodynamic idea of collusion in their theoretical discussion of multi-party group dynamics. When difference is feared and sensed to be insurmountable, Gray and Schruijer suggest that collusion will be the outcome with different perspectives becoming undiscussed and hidden. Both in Janis' (1972) and Gray and Schruijer's (2009) work, however, the lack of discussion or debate might be conceptualised as a more thematic (Kurzon, 2007) form of silence that emerges from the ongoing social interaction without a clear agentic withholding. Gray and Schruijer for instance discuss the notion of collusion as a *preconscious* form of silence since it can be

altered when, as in the story of the emperor's new clothes, attention is called to the phenomenon. Other work on silence in groups uses a much clearer individual-level cognitive psychological approach to the source of silence in groups. Bowen and Blackmon (2003), for instance, use Noelle-Neumann's (1974) theory of a spiral of silence in which the lack of prior comment on an issue from others in the group causes individuals not to speak out, since they do not have a sense of how others will receive their contribution. The challenge is to be the first to reveal what may or may not be a popular view, and runs the risk of rendering an individual different from the group.

2.7.2 'Perceived efficacy', futility and power

Morrison (2011, p.382) defines perceived efficacy as:

'the individual's judgment about whether speaking up is likely to be effective.'

The idea of the futility of speaking up invokes again the idea of acquiescence that was discussed in Section 2.3 (Pinder and Harlos, 2001; Van Dyne, Ang and Botero, 2003). Knoll and Van Dick (2013) suggest that acquiescent silence may be analysed in terms of questionnaire statements like 'nothing will change anyway', 'my supervisors are not open to proposals, concerns and the like', and 'I will not find a sympathetic ear anyway'. In their empirical paper, they suggest that more research would be useful into the complex relationship between voice and organisational identification in terms of specifying what the focus of identification might be (the organisation, or professional affiliation, or an individual, and so on) that leads to the perception that speaking up is ineffective.

While silence is here associated with a lack of efficacy, Fletcher and Watson (2007) provide an alternative perspective. Their ethnographic study of voice and silence in a construction firm challenges the idea that voice is simplistically demonstrative of power and silence of powerlessness by pointing out the different social contexts and networks of relationships in which voice may be expressed: for instance showing how a sub-contractor raises complaints about the employment practices in a construction company in different ways to different people. Brown and Coupland's (2005) study similarly examines the discursive practices of a group of graduate trainees and suggest that the trainees construct not simply a requirement to stay silent but to negotiate how and what can be said, and what cannot, as a means of Foucauldian self-compliance and of positive impression management. Thus silence here, as for Fletcher and Watson (2007), is not so unilaterally associated with either power or powerlessness, but is seen in far more complex terms within ongoing practices of social interaction. I return to the idea of silence and learnt behaviour, and the relationship between efficacy and climates of silence, in Section 2.9 below.

2.8 Roles, role boundaries and silence

The idea of role has been used in a number of ways in the literature on silence. Firstly, there has been some limited research that attends to different constructions of silence according to specific roles. In their study of members of aircraft cabin crews, Bienefeld and Grote (2012) found significant differences in the reasons that were given for staying silent according to job role, although not for gender, tenure or age. While flight attendants tended to talk about fear of punishment, for instance, captains tended to talk about not wanting to embarrass other team members.

There has also been some focus on in-role versus extra-role distinctions, rather than distinctions between different roles, although this research has tended to emphasise voice rather than silence in this regard (e.g. LePine and Van Dyne, 1998; Van Dyne, Kamdar and Joireman, 2008). Furthermore, it is not quite clear how helpful this distinction is! The emphasis on in-role versus extra-role seems to be at least partly about developing a clear construct and a set of measurements for the concept of voice in quantitative research studies rather than for any other theoretical or empirical reason.²⁰

Perhaps a more useful set of literature is that which discusses the impact of how roles are performed and delivered, and how this creates certain conditions for speaking up. Detert and Burris (2007) suggest that silence and voice can be altered according to how a role is performed, suggesting that specific leadership behaviours, showing the leader's openness to change and willingness to act, can encourage employees to speak up. They point out, like Burris (2012), that interpretation matters, since voice may be heard as 'counter-role' rather than 'extra-role' (p.881). Edmondson (2003) discusses situations where roles are in transition, in the context of interdisciplinary teams in situations that are uncertain and ambiguous during times of change. From an empirical analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, she proposes that leaders of emergency clinical teams can create a greater sense of psychological safety by downplaying status and power differences between roles, and by providing a motivating rationale for speaking up in the interests of learning.

²⁰ For example, the discussion in LePine and Van Dyne's (1998) paper seems to get caught up in debating construct validity and trying to pin down voice to an ever tighter, more specific definition in order to develop what can be argued as valid measures for the concept. Thus the authors suggest voice is different from complaining, organisational citizenship behaviour, helping behaviour, whistleblowing, organisational dissent, and is extra-role in contrast to the in-role 'expression of constructive challenge [...] specified in formal job requirements', (p.854), that is, by consultants or change agents.

She argues that such practices facilitate a focus on the task at hand rather than on interpersonal relationship risk. This is similar to Tsoukas' (2009) suggestion that in order to generate productive conversational dialogue, a 'relational engagement' is needed that is characterised by relationships of 'favourable expectation towards the other' and that stands in contrast to a 'calculated engagement' in which individual behaviour is oriented to 'maximise individual or sectional gains or protect turf' (Tsoukas, 2009, p.945). In such a state of relational engagement, he proposes, individuals from different practice backgrounds can develop new transformative and creative understandings from different interpretations of words, rather than becoming embroiled in misunderstandings.

2.9 Sensemaking and learning to stay silent

A final set of literature emphasises silence as dependent upon the contextual setting and as socially learnt practice. Brown and Coupland's (2005) study of graduate trainees, for example, elaborates on discursive constructions of norms of silence and particular worker types by which the trainees show how they learn to conform to certain behavioural and communicative requirements. One particularly influential paper²¹ by Morrison and Milliken (2000) develops the idea of *organisational silence*, characterised by the existence of a *climate of silence* defined as 'characterised by two shared beliefs: (1) speaking up about problems in the organisation is not worth the effort, and (2) voicing one's opinions and concerns is dangerous' (2000, p.714) - that is, the same perceptions of safety and efficiency that are described above. Morrison and Milliken's theoretical paper proposes a model of wider influences on silence behaviour that includes a mix of structural characteristics of the organisation, such as

²¹ See citations in Greenberg and Edwards (2009), Milliken and Lam, (2009), Morrison, Wheeler-Smith and Kamdar, (2011), Vakola and Bouradas, (2005).

centralised decision-making, and managerial arrangements produced by managerial fear of feedback and implicit beliefs about the organisation's employees, combined with processes of collective sensemaking interactions among employees.

Vakola and Bouradas (2005) provide an empirical questionnaire-based test of Morrison and Milliken's (2000) model from which they suggest that employees' silence is influenced more by the availability of communication opportunities and the 'micro-climates' of supervisor attitudes than by the 'macro-climate' of top management attitudes (p.451). This influence of the more immediate group seems to be supported by Morrison, Wheeler-Smith and Kamdar's (2011) empirical research on voice behaviour in groups. They propose that a *group voice climate* - the individual perception about the shared belief of the group that speaking up is safe and effective - influences individual voice behaviour and has a greater impact on voice behaviour than variables of individual satisfaction or identification with the group. Morrison, Wheeler-Smith and Kamdar (2011) also found that different work groups in the same organisation exhibited different strengths of group voice climate. Despite the importance given to collective sensemaking processes and social dynamics, there has been very little research that has paid direct empirical attention to the processes of social interaction that may throw light on the development of these climate ideas.

2.10 Summary

This chapter has covered the literature both broadly about silence and, as specifically as possible, about withholding as a particular understanding of silence. What becomes highlighted is how silence emerges as a range of ontological forms and from various provenances, connected both to psychological risks and to the

appropriateness of behaviour, either in relation to roles or wider organisational or group normative understandings. While the research on silence as withholding (often implicitly) connects the phenomenon to relationships, the OB literature has tended to be focused on attempts to explain the rationality for choosing voice or silence, rather than a different kind of research question that seeks to situate silence as an action within social processes. The direct empirical examination and analysis of such relationships thus largely remains missing from the body of research.

The next chapter to some extent traces back over some of the arguments in this chapter to show how, by altering the underpinning theoretical framework, the notion of silence as withholding is altered. Chapter 3 introduces Bakhtin's dialogic discourse and discusses how this has led to a different approach to cognitive and social psychological issues.

3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNICATION

In this chapter, I set out two theories of how communication works and discuss the different implications for the conceptualisation of silence as withholding that emerges from them. What I hope to do through this is to show how much of the OB literature has relied implicitly on a transmission model of communication through which to study the idea of silence and withholding. I argue that the transmission model underpins and primarily supports a positivist approach to silence and a focus on the individual as a discrete agent who chooses to remain silent.

This chapter starts with a discussion of the transmission model of communication, and how its rather mechanistic version of language has been used to construct not only a particular understanding of silence but also of voice. I go on to show how the implications of this model might be understood through comparing it to the more performative approach to language contained in Austin's speech act theory (Austin, 1975/1962). The chapter then moves on to develop the dialogic model of communication derived from Mikhail Bakhtin's work and subsequent scholars to show how different versions of silence and of the silent self are offered. It is in this contrasting model, in which meanings in language become more situated and utterances become more open to contested interpretation and evaluation, that silence may take not only a slightly different social meaning but also a slightly different social manifestation and form. In using such a model, different kinds of questions for research may become apparent, such as those elaborated within the field of discursive psychology. I end the chapter by very briefly reviewing this research perspective on language.

3.1 Analysing the transmission model of communication

The model of communication used in much of the organisational behaviour literature on silence and voice is one depicting the communicative process as a clear, cognitive one²² in which atomised (Wertsch, 2001/1990), agentic individuals come to some individual decision about what, and whether, to communicate. The ontological conceptualisation of the withholding of 'information, suggestions, ideas, questions or concerns' (Morrison, 2011, p.377) is essentially as clear-cut, discrete thoughts that just require transmission to others. The positivist research perspective and objectivist (Cunliffe, 2011) ontology uses the idea that an external reality exists, in which discrete and abstract entities such as 'organisations', 'teams', 'silence' and 'voice' have defined and unproblematic boundaries.²³

Such a paradigm is arguably best fitted into a transmission model where messages are conceptualised as clearly understandable (and understood) parcels of information, or knowledge, passing in a neutral medium between speaker and receiver and back again (Wertsch, 2001/1990). Wertsch (2001/1990) notes a number of features of the transmission model. Firstly, the model proposes a process of encoding of an idea into a signal by a sender; the transmission of a signal by the sender to a receiver; and the decoding of the signal by the receiver (p.225).

Individuals are conceptualised as discrete, autonomous agents. The underlying conduit metaphor for language includes thoughts and feelings being transferred via

²² See for instance the discussion in LePine and Van Dyne (1998) and Morrison and Milliken, (2000), and their use of language such as speaking up about the 'truth' about an organisational issue or problem.

²³ Some of the chapters that address silence in the recent *Handbook of Research on Employee Voice* (2014) also provide a good example of such a collection of research. Several of the individual chapters develop and use abstract notions of silence as if describing defined bounded objects.

words from the sender and extracted subsequently by the receiver. Meaning is thus contained within language as part of this process of transmission.

To highlight the implication of this perspective, I suggest it is useful to compare the elements of the transmission model of communication with the terminology of speech act theory (Austin, 1975/1962): of locution, proposition, illocution and perlocution. For reasons of space, I do not intend to provide significant detail of Austin's speech act theory, nor how it was subsequently developed by Searle (1969), but want to emphasise the social nature and performativity of language that speech act theory advances (Potter, 2001). Austin points out that we performatively 'do things with words' (Austin, 1975/1962), that language is not simply mechanical but needs to be analysed in actual situations of language use, as speech acts. Thus, intentions and understandings become relevant as *functional* aspects of language (Mey, 2001) with some speech acts, such as promising, requiring particular conditions for their successful functioning. The terminology of speech act theory outlines distinctions between the *locution*, as the concrete form of words that a speaker uses, in order to communicate some *proposition* as an idea. What the speaker intends by expressing the utterance is described as the speech act's *illocutionary* force (the intention to state, to promise, to request, and so on). Moreover, what the hearer of the utterance does as an effect or consequence of the illocutionary act is described as the speech act's *perlocutionary* force. (For speech act theory and its terminology, see Austin, 1975/1962; Mey, 2001, p.93-96; Potter, 2001, p.43-46; Potter and Wetherall, 1987, p.17.)

My argument is that the majority of OB research on silence and voice has defined *voice* as particular types of speech acts imbued with particular propositional content: reporting wrongdoing or organisational injustice (Pinder and Harlos, 2001);

discussing organisational problems or issues (Milliken, Morrison and Hewlin, 2003); offering constructive comments or suggestions (Van Dyne and LePine 1998) and so on. The literature has emphasised the importance of the substantive parcel of improvement-oriented information, suggestions, etc, and has focused on the illocutionary aspects associated with the speaker (why the speaker does or does not speak up: the reasons and antecedents for such intentions).²⁴ It has tended not to focus on the performative nature of communication²⁵ and has downplayed the difficulty of perlocutionary understanding.

The significance of speech act theory for the study of silence and voice is in pointing out that not only may *illocution* vary - that is: what someone intends by expressing the same concrete utterance is not always the same - but that perlocution may also vary - that the hearer may not understand what the speaker intended and/or may respond in a different way than the speaker was expecting. The use of speech act theory has been criticised for taking too decontextualised an approach to the study of language by extracting sentences out of context (Linell, 2009). However, its terminology and emphasis on the social nature of communication provides a useful starting point from which to develop the more situated, dialogic approach to which I now turn.

3.2 Introducing a dialogic model of communication

Dialogic theories of communication contrast with the transmission model described above and with more structuralist approaches, such as Ferdinand de Saussure's

²⁴ Compare for instance the suggestion made by Brinsfield et al. (2009), cited in Chapter 2, relating to the three key features by which the literature on silence and voice may be integrated: content, target and motive.

²⁵ Fletcher and Watson (2007) and Brown and Coupland (2005) are notable exceptions in this regard.

(Shotter, 2008), that consider language as a set of abstract signs in fixed relationships to each other. The fundamental difference is in the removal of the location for meaning-making from being inherently contained in language itself to being more localised and contingent (Maybin, 2001). Dialogism as a theory moves towards a more situated, socially embedded and social constructionist perspective in which language is conceptualised as portraying not a straight *representation* of the social world but as a resource that *creates* social reality and meaning, and through which reality and meaning can be contested (Linell, 2009). After setting out Bakhtin's theory of language and dialogic discourse below, I discuss how such theory has led to a more relational conceptualisation of communication and a different ontological conceptualisation of the individual self, and how the notion of silence and its significance might be reconceptualised as one that is caught up in relationships.

3.2.1 Bakhtin's dialogic discourse

Bakhtin's work on dialogic discourse emphasises the specific, situated nature of meaning in communication. Language is inherently ideological and associated with the historic and dynamic struggle between different social groups over time (Maybin, 2001). Two slightly different concepts - of speech genre and heteroglossia - refer to different social practices of communication in society. The concept of a speech genre (Bakhtin, 1986) relates to a way of speaking in a particular everyday situation and for a particular social purpose (a project group meeting, for instance) (Kent, 1998; Maybin, 2001). Maybin (2001, p.66) suggests:

'the kind of things we say, the way we say them and the evaluations of experience that they carry will vary in the different speech genres we are engaged in over the course of a day.'

Alongside speech genres used in these contextual situations, there are also different social languages in which different 'evaluative accents' (Maybin, 2001, p.65, quoting Volosinov) are connected to words or phrases. These languages, heteroglossia, are associated with different social classes, professions, or other groups. The way in which language is used thus expresses particular ideologies and highlights tensions between different social groups, inasmuch as language contains multiple and diverse voices and previous uses of words.

In this dialogic model, communication has both an expressive and evaluative component (Morris, 1994). Thus social relations can be traced in language, since the historic struggles of society can be heard in language (Dentith, 1995). Bakhtin (1981, p.293) writes:

'[T]here are no 'neutral' words and forms - words and forms that can belong to 'no one'; language has been completely taken over, shot through with intentions and accents. [...] All words have the 'taste' of a profession, a genre, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life. [...] As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other.'

Wertsch points out that language is 'rented' (Wertsch, 2001/1990, p.222). This sense of words not belonging to anyone, such that it is hard to know the answer to 'who is talking' (Wertsch, 2001/1990), is developed in the idea of double-voiced discourse and utterances being saturated with multiple voices and multiple intentions (Cooren and Sandler, 2014). In dialogic discourse, however, utterances reflect not only

previous historical language use but also an embodied and active orientation to the other, being both responsive and anticipatory to local context (Bakhtin, 1981; Shotter, 2008). Utterances are directed and shaped in both expressive and evaluative aspects to an addressee, whether defined as an immediate interlocutor in dialogue or as an absent, more indefinite group (Bakhtin, 1986), and to their anticipated response (Bakhtin, 1986; Morris, 1994). Meaning emerges in this specific local context from embodied social relations, rather than being contained, as in a transmission model, within the words themselves. Larrain and Haye (2012a, p.8) talk about 'word-meaning':

'As live signs, words are word-meanings: expressions of surprise, anger, of a certain interest, reactions to a given word - in sum, responsive expressions of a position toward the ongoing activity and situation'.

Meaning is thus subject to constant change, is ephemeral and unstable. There are simultaneously centripetal and centrifugal forces in language: at the same time as authoritative forms of discourse aim to impose standardised and stable meanings centripetally, this stability is undermined and subverted centrifugally by other internally persuasive discourse that creates new conditions for 'interanimating relationships' (Bakhtin, 1981, p.346), leading to the development of new meaning and interaction.

3.2.2 The relational nature of communication, the self and silence

Shotter suggests that Bakhtin establishes an 'emotional-volitional tone' to language and communication and, by drawing on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), develops this idea further:

'this means that in everyday effortless talk, listeners do not need to *interpret* a speaker's utterances to grasp his or her thought, 'the listener receives thought from speech itself'[...]. It is present in the way in which speakers 'give shape' to their utterances. Thus the 'conceptual meaning' of a speaker's words, 'must be formed by a kind of deduction from a *gestural meaning*, which is immanent in speech' [...]. In effect, we must ask ourselves: What kind of person, in what kind of situation, would say such things? And to whom would they say them?'²⁶ (Shotter, 2008, p.503).

The model of transmission is here firmly replaced by a more embodied, phenomenological understanding of communication. Communication is not only a *product* of relationships, it also *produces* relational consequences (Erickson, 2004, p.6).²⁷ Shotter (2008) highlights this relational quality of language in Bakhtin's proposal that the word becomes 'one's own only *when the speaker populates it with his own intentions*' (my italics, Bakhtin, 1981, p.293). The personal effort expended by the speaker to make words 'one's own', Shotter suggests, is not somehow an added extra but an inherent relational quality of communication that establishes a particular (responsive and changing) form of engagement between individuals (Shotter, 2008, p.509).

In this Bakhtinian dialogic model of communication, the self here is conceptualised as agentic but not fully autonomous. The forms of expression that are possible for the individual at any moment are shaped by others and by prior historic discourse (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986), rather than originating from within oneself as an independent

²⁶ The quotations in the extract refer to Merleau-Ponty's work (1962) cited in Shotter (2008); the omissions are page numbers.

²⁷ This relational consequence indeed is a feature which, as Shotter (2008) notes, is used in the research methodology of conversation analysis where, if an individual does not respond in a particular anticipated way, some form of conversational repair is demanded.

agent. While the embodied individual lifeworld is important in this Bakhtinian perspective (Cooren and Sandler, 2014), this social reality is essentially dialogic, developed within the interplay of relationships with others. The self is no longer coherent, unitary and integrated, but realised through an ongoing dialogue with others, as de Peuter (1998) writes:

'the dialogic self knows itself through the responses of real, imagined, historical and generalized others.' (de Peuter, 1998, p.39)

Such views of a dialogic self are also reflected by other authors such as G.H.Mead, whose work has been influential in social psychology: the self becomes an object on which the individual can reflect, creating a distinction between 'I' and 'me', and through which s/he becomes agential and can choose how to respond (Mead, 1934). In Mead's work, it is the conversation of gestures, the combination of gesture and response, which together form a social act and through which meaning emerges and significant symbols are generated (Linell, 2009, p.183).

Shotter and Billig (1998) note that Bakhtin describes internal thought processes also in dialogic terms, as inner speech imbued with the same dialogic tensions and relational influences and processes as verbal communication. The phenomenon of withholding of conscious inner speech, as a part of that inner dialogue, might therefore arguably be formulated and understood in a similar way to that of verbal communication, being shaped by the same tensions in meaning-making and the same multi-voiced processes, by speech genres and heteroglossic clashes, by centrifugal and centripetal forces, and by the embodied, relationally responsive considerations that arise in concrete situations. Indeed, Larrain and Haye (2012a) develop the idea of 'inner discourse', as acts of thinking contrasted to acts of uttering, that might be

usefully compared to the type of withholding of interest in this thesis. They suggest that this inner discourse is produced by a combination of two processes: of an individual listening to the changing flow of outer discourse - what others are saying - and listening to the flow of his/her own attention to this outer discourse, the comments, questions and so on, that arise. What Larrain and Haye (2012a) suggest is that the essential hallmark of inner discourse is not that it has to be hidden or private but that it is 'self-regulated, self-aware and self-responsible' (p.7). As such, it is an accountable activity. Moreover, its dialogic nature is not contained within the essential structure of language but is connected to the movement between different ideological positions that develop through this flow of discourse.

It is not just the reflexivity about the *self*, however, that is implicated in a dialogic model of communication. One of Bakhtin's other concepts is polyphony as an issue of authorship and representation (Belova, King and Sliwa, 2008), the idea of acknowledging the level of independence between the author and the characters in a novel²⁸ (Bakhtin, 1994) which are viewed as 'autonomous subjects not as objectified images held within the author's vision' (Morris, 1994, p.89). In a dialogic model of communication questions arise with regard to knowing who the other is: interpreting, responding to, but also representing, the other person based on his/her production of an utterance. The identity of who is actually speaking is problematised in Bakhtinian theory (Cooren and Sandler, 2014). What Shotter implies in the extract at the start of this section (Shotter, 2008, p.503) is that we develop our embodied interpretation of the other from their social gestures. As a character, the other becomes unfinalised and *unfinalisable* (Bakhtin, 1984). Cooren and Sandler (2014) note the ventriloquism involved in such communicative relationships, as an individual speaks

²⁸ Bakhtin's work was of course focused on literary studies.

with and through the voices of others: makes these other voices speak and say certain things, and in turn is represented in the ventriloquised voices of others - a concept that Cooren and Sandler term as 'upstream' and 'downstream' ventriloquising (Cooren and Sandler, p.2014, p.230).²⁹ One's knowledge of others becomes inherently provisional (Belova, King and Sliwa, 2008).

Such a proposal has methodological implications for the study of silence. The cognitive and social psychological approach to silence and voice, discussed in the previous chapter, is underpinned by a transmission model in which participants' language is understood as an expression of internal thought processes and mental states. Bakhtinian theory meanwhile has parallels in a more discursive approach to psychology (see Billig et al., 1988; Potter and Wetherall, 1987; Shotter and Billig, 1998). In this discursive psychology, attention is paid to social practice rather than to the internal states of individuals (Potter and Wetherall, 1987). Language becomes a way not to gain access to internal mental states, such as attitudes to or beliefs about silence, but to explore the way in which claims about something are constructed: that is, communication is seen as having relational and strategic aspects that develop *in that situated context*.

This point segues into the Methodology chapter which now follows and which covers in more depth the ontological and epistemological issues upon which my research was developed, and the more detailed research design and methods for its operationalisation.

²⁹ Such a perspective on communication is more fully developed by Cooren, Taylor and others into one that suggests that communication is constitutive of organisation and of social reality (see Cooren et al., 2011; Taylor and Cooren, 1997; Taylor et al., 1996). I do not use their perspective explicitly in this thesis.

4 THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

I start this chapter by setting out the research study's design, the ontological and epistemological claims, and the research traditions that were used to develop the research design. I then introduce the more detailed methodological considerations and the data generation tools, as well as issues of access to the research site.

Because there were a number of different forms of data generated, I provide an example of how these forms were combined. I then discuss the important issue of reflexivity, both within data generation and analysis stages. I describe the analytical processes of coding and interpretation that developed the theoretical concepts discussed in later chapters. In order to keep together the discussions about how I used the data within this thesis, I then set out sections on transcription, writing and representation, including how the structure of the thesis was derived, and issues of validity against which I hope this study may be assessed. Finally I discuss ethics and some issues encountered when applying matters of protocol to issues of fieldwork.

4.1 The research design

The exploration of silence as thoughts that are consciously not communicated relies upon an ontology in which human subjects can be conceptualised as engaging in activity that is unknown or unreadable to other human beings. The difficulty may not lie in this notion of human beings existing as individuals with inner lifeworlds (Husserl, 1970/1936) but in the challenge this presents for researching the phenomenon. The methodology requires some means to provoke (Ramsey, 2008) data about the unobservable, unhearable phenomenon of silence as an act of withholding from verbal communication. While my own consciously withheld silence may have been sufficient to have informed an autoethnographic study, I

wanted to understand better how *other* people responded to the notion of staying silent as part of an ongoing process of project delivery. I therefore required participants' talk about their silence. It is through the discursive constructions of withholding that the individual practice of it is given some ontological form.

However, taking seriously the idea of silence as withholding requires me to recognise as a possibility that withholding can take place in interviews with a researcher as much as in the other situations, such as project group meetings, about which I am interviewing participants! The underlying theoretical perspective therefore is social constructionist (Burr, 2003), and the epistemological commitment is one of intersubjectivity (Cunliffe, 2011), that is, that my way of knowing about and interpreting others' actions, including their internal dialogic thought processes, is through my social relationship with them.

In order to generate the empirical data for a rich and evocative account of project delivery in which the phenomenon of silence was embedded, I chose a qualitative, ethnographic approach. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.3), although noting the variability of views about what constitutes the fundamental features of ethnography, provide a list of what they consider to be its common characteristics, namely:

- the conducting of empirical fieldwork to study everyday contexts (rather than, for instance, experimental designs set up by the researcher);
- data collected from a range of sources, but with participation observation and/or relatively informal conversations as the main source(s);
- data collection being a relatively unstructured activity, with categories for interpretation emerging *out of* fieldwork and analytic processes, rather than being *prior* to these;

- an in-depth, small-scale focus on one or a small number of cases;
- and an interpretative analytical stance.

While this list points to some common characteristics, a huge variety of styles of ethnographic work has nevertheless developed from the original anthropological conceptualisation of fieldwork. Van Maanen (2011) for instance, reflecting upon his 1988 categories of realist, confessional and impressionist tales (Van Maanen, 1988), notes how studies have changed to cover multiple sites, to incorporate in different ways the voices of those being studied, and to develop less closed approaches to storytelling. Cunliffe (2011) likewise notes the great range of ontological and epistemological assumptions that may accompany organisational ethnographic work, and I go into more detail about my own approach over the next few sections in this chapter.

Watson (2011) highlights the benefit of thinking about ethnography not as research *method* but as research *output*, with practical use value of helping to learn 'how things work' (p.212) rather than a truth value measured simply in the accuracy of reporting. He pinpoints the usefulness of ethnography as the ability to position and study participant utterances and interview data in a detailed empirical context through participant observation of natural settings and the development of relationships over time between researcher and research participant. Of particular relevance for my research objective, and the contribution that I wish to make to the collection of more positivist social or cognitive psychological examinations of staying silent, is Watson's plea for ethnography to focus on social concerns, and to stick with sociological questions rather than psychological ones:

'[ironically] if we focus [...] on 'how things work' in field settings rather than trying to get "inside" people's experiences or poke about inside their heads and hearts, we might produce work which will be much more relevant to human *experience* and, indeed, to practice'. (Watson, 2011, p.213)³⁰

The key point here is that an ethnographic research approach enables an exploratory focus on practice - in this case, a practice of staying silent - as an emergent phenomenon that develops some social meaning in a particular empirical context, and allows for the active participation of researcher (and my thoughts) alongside that of research participants (and their talk).

Since the central ethnographic premise of participant *observation* on its own would not allow me to notice anything other than my own withholding, I developed the research design to work with the idea of an intertextual dialogue between different forms of data. The term 'intertextuality' originates in Julia Kristeva's work on Bakhtin, and points to the way in which the meaning of a text is not contained within itself but is generated from its relationship to other texts (Allen, 2000). The analytic strategy relied on an intertextual approach that moved across different forms of data, that linked participants' discursive constructions of silence to discourse in other social situations, and that was based upon a reflexive and phenomenological understanding of what was going on for participants as they worked through the process of project delivery. My own embeddedness in the research, my active participant observation, is a critical component of the research design. What I know of participants' silence, and my interpretation of the meaning of their discourse about their own practice of silence, arises from my own intersubjective involvement in the

³⁰ Note that Van Maanen (2011) explicitly discusses this statement, and disagrees with it inasmuch as he considers the attempt to understand others' subjective experience as part of the ethnographic project.

social situation. Discourse is conceptualised not as a straightforward received view of the world; it does not simply reflect the reality of what exists. Instead, discourse is viewed as social action, as a resource by means of which participants can actively seek to influence, construct and negotiate meaning in the world (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000). Attention to matters of reflexivity is therefore a core concern, to notice the processes of data co-construction between me and research participants, and the processes of interpretation both in the immediate context of fieldwork and during the subsequent stage of data analysis. The discussion about reflexivity is developed further in Section 4.8.

In the next section below, I provide further explication about three particular strands of ethnographic lineage which have been particularly influential in this research. I suggest that it is useful to discuss these because, although I draw from their traditions, my work here is also different from them in many respects. I elaborate on both the overlapping and divergent features in order to position my own research clearly.

4.2 A dialogic form of ethnography

Three particular traditions of ethnography - the ethnography of communication, linguistic ethnography, and autoethnography - have been drawn on in this study. However, there are also important distinctions between my study and the types of studies that have fallen previously under the auspices of these ethnographic traditions. Below I describe briefly the key features of the three traditions, and then come back to the distinctions in my own research design.

There are two similar and intersecting traditions that combine an interest in ethnography and communication. Both the *ethnography of communication* and

linguistic ethnography reference Hymes' work on speech communities and communicative competence (Hymes, 1962, 1972), Gumperz' work on sociolinguistics (Gumperz, 1982), and Goffman's work on social interaction (Goffman, 1959, 1974, 1983, 2003/1967). While there is some considerable overlap between the two, and debatably a lack of clarity about what precisely defines one from the other,³¹ the main tendency seems to be to equate the ethnography of communication with a more traditional, anthropologically-inspired form of ethnography, and not least perhaps with a slant towards a North American community of practice. The benefits of turning to the discipline of the ethnography of communication is that it draws attention to language and communication as a topic for study. Meanwhile, linguistic ethnography is associated most prominently perhaps with work in the UK profiled via the UK Linguistic Ethnography Forum (UK LEF).³² I discuss these two below.

4.2.1 Ethnography of communication

Saville-Troike (2003, p.1) notes the interest of the ethnography of communication as the 'patterning of communicative behaviour'. Fitch (2001, p.57) defines it as the 'symbols and meanings, premises, and rules applied to speaking within specific groups of people'. The origin of the ethnography of communication is often pinpointed as Dell Hymes' 1962 article on the ethnography of speaking and the consequent special issue of *American Anthropologist* in 1964 (Keating, 2001; Saville-Troike, 2003). The lineage draws on the anthropological tradition of both Franz Boas, in terms of the interest in comparative linguistic structures, and

³¹ Compare descriptions of the ethnography of communication by Fitch (2001) and Saville-Troike (2003), and linguistic ethnography by Rampton et al. (2004), and Tusting and Maybin (2007).

³² See for instance the Linguistic Ethnography Forum website: <http://www.lingethnog.org/> accessed 3 September 2014).

Bronislaw Malinowski, with the interest in the social context of language (Keating, 2001). Sapir and Whorf's work provided a focus on how a cultural community's structure of linguistic resources represents radically different ways of viewing the world (Sapir, 1921; Whorf, 1956: both discussed in Fitch, 2001). Hymes (1962), in his use of analytical concepts such as *communicative events* and *speech communities*, aimed towards developing a universalist model of *communicative competence* that could be applied across cultural boundaries and which would provide, as Fitch (2001, p.60) writes, 'an etic (general or abstract) system of categories through which emic (specific) description could proceed'. Communicative competence is defined not simply as understanding the *words* but also understanding the *situations* in which it is appropriate to say those words. The ethnography of communication focuses on the local complexity of practices of, or understanding about, language use (Fitch, 2001). Empirical examples are Basso's (1970) study of the practice of silence among the Western Apache Native American tribe, and Agar's (1973) study of heroin users in New York City (cited in Fitch, 2001).

4.2.2 Linguistic ethnography

Maybin and Tusting (2011) suggest that linguistic ethnography draws primarily on sociolinguistics rather than the anthropological foundation described above, with the discipline using the performativity of language that emerged from Austin's work on speech act theory (Austin, 1975/1962). They associate linguistic ethnography with more of a focus on the precise processes of sociolinguistic analysis than on fieldwork immersion. Researchers work with tiny fragments of conversational data to unpick the micro-processes of social interaction. This line of ethnographic research is often located in educational contexts (Maybin and Tusting, 2011), such as Rampton's

(2006) investigation of teenagers' talking styles in a school, or studies of literacy in the workplace (Farrell, 2006) or community (Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck, 2005).

The idea of a speech community as an *a priori* stable entity is here less salient, with categories of identity becoming instead an integral part of the research, as different resources that may be claimed, contested and so on (Rampton et al., 2004). In Rampton et al.'s (2004) description of linguistic ethnography, the authors offer its core premise as: 'close analysis of situated language use can provide both fundamental and distinctive insights into the mechanisms and dynamics of social and cultural production in everyday activity'. They suggest that the benefit of joining linguistics and ethnography is the 'opening up' of linguistics and the 'tying down' of ethnography (Rampton et al., 2004, p.4), so that ethnographic participant-observer claims are scrutinised for taken-for-granted assumptions, and linguistically derived analytic claims are encouraged to look at the wider social implications, and to consider what has been left out of the text.

4.2.3 My own ethnographic approach (and why it is not autoethnography)

In summary, I situate my work on silence within this interdisciplinary ethnographic lineage above, that crosses the boundaries of research relating to discourse, language and social issues. Within the ethnography of communication, I position my interest in communication and in silence as a specific feature of communicative practice. From linguistic ethnography, I take the use of discourse analytic processes within an overarching ethnographic framework to help make the familiar strange, to analyse

reflexively what I may be taking for granted, and to provide an evidentiary basis for the study.

However, there are differences between my work and both of these traditions. Most importantly, my analysis uses discourse analytic tools in a much looser, less systematic way than linguistic ethnographers would favour, and I use a much smaller, and less well-defined, theoretical sampling of a speech community than ethnographers of communication might prioritise. Van Maanen (2011) notes, for instance, the rise of less bounded ethnographic studies in organisational research, in which multiple sites of working practice are covered, and in which there is a greater emphasis on instability, fluidity of meaning and a less closed portraiture. I follow this perspective and his identification of the conflicts and disparities in organisational life, where it is not a matter of presenting simply 'the natives' point of view' but of asking 'the view of which native?' (Van Maanen, 2011, p.228).

This thesis represents a written ethnographic output of a field study that investigated the social interactions among just seven people (including me) in one project group, whose practice is shown to vary across different spatial and temporal social situations. I suggest that the theoretical and methodological feel of this study might be summarised as 'dialogic ethnography'. The term is offered as a way of highlighting the contrast between:

- my small-scale focus on one project group of six people, and the larger scale focus of speech communities in the ethnography of communication (Saville-Troike, 2003);

- my stress on the dynamic and changing nature of social interaction and communicative practice, rather than the more stable focus in more traditional forms of ethnography (Van Maanen, 1988, 1995; Yanow, 2009, p.195);
- the prioritisation of Bakhtin's theories of dialogic discourse instead of other sociological or interactional theorists, such as Goffman or Garfinkel (Samra-Fredericks and Bargiela-Chiappini, 2008); and
- a looser application of discourse analytic tools than in linguistic ethnographic work, with a central theme of my own involvement and intersubjective (Cunliffe, 2011) engagement with research participants in dialogue.

One further form of ethnography - autoethnography - needs mentioning to compare and contrast my work. My own embodied presence was more central to the data generation than might be the case in other ethnographic studies, and the importance of my presence parallels autoethnographic work (see for instance Coffey, 1999; Ellis, 2004; Sambrook, Jones and Doloriert, 2014). Sambrook, Jones and Doloriert (2014, p.179), citing other authors, suggest that autoethnography is 'a research approach that consists of "...highly personalised accounts that draw on the experience of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding"'. The ethnographic approach taken for my empirical research allowed for my own silences to be included and drawn upon. While it is possible to argue that there is an important autoethnographic element, it was not, however, this personal experience per se that was the topic for study. Instead, I suggest that my own involvement was a necessary reflexive component of the research design. Hence I do not claim the research as autoethnographic in aim but instead describe the

personalised nature of the research in terms of reflexivity and intersubjectivity (see Section 4.8).

The study is perhaps best described as being of a partial ethnographic type³³ rather than full immersion. The ethnographic work was carried out over a period of six months, during which time I was frequently present in the field (roughly a few days every one to two weeks) but not full-time, with email and phone contact in between these times. This represented a similar situation to the involvement of all but one of the other members of the project group³⁴ who were working on other projects at the same time, and hence whose time was only ever partially dedicated to the project's delivery. The participants' paths crossed only across a geographically and temporally fragmented network of sites: my own involvement did likewise. Indeed, my part-time pattern of involvement had one particular advantage in research terms: of enabling the analysis of data to take place alongside new data generation, as processes of transcription, coding, and fieldwork overlapped.

4.3 Choosing the research setting

It was the phenomenon of staying silent in project work that had prompted my initial research interest: thus I wanted a project group setting as the research site.

Nevertheless, working with a time-limited project group also had other practical research benefits. To begin with, usually projects have particular, identified memberships to constitute the group involved in its delivery, with often a function or specific role for each member. Having a defined project group membership therefore facilitated the identification of the relationships and interactions for study:

³³ See, for instance, the discussion in Czarniawska (2004, 2008) Pritchard (2011).

³⁴ One of the university team, Kerry, worked full-time on the project during the period of my fieldwork.

it gave me a defined group to study. Moreover, very practically in terms of conducting PhD research work, having a defined project lifecycle put a time-limit around the length of my research involvement. Thirdly, the lifecycle also helped with the idea of the meaningfulness of the notion of speaking up, that is, when communication might be necessary or effective, when it could make a difference to the actual delivery of work. I used the category of being a project group member as a device to convey my research interest and give some relevance and meaning to my questions and interactions with participants, as I asked them about communicative practice within the group.

I found three potential project groups with whom I could have developed the research, in three different organisational settings. Two of these groups were intraorganisational and met via teleconferencing rather than having face to face physical meetings. The third was the inter-organisational project described in this study. The inter-organisational setting provided an arena in which participants were not necessarily sharing common terminologies or assumptions; in which they came from different communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991), and may have had different practices of constructing what was important and useful to discuss and agree in order to deliver the project successfully. It thus provided an arena which I judged might be an interesting one to observe to see how events unfolded, and how discussions about silence developed as the project group members negotiated a way of working together.

As a research design choice related to prior theory on silence, I also felt that an inter-organisational project group was useful to attempt to trigger the discussion of how interpretations of similarity or difference influenced the discourse around speaking up and staying silent. Psychological theories such as the spiral of silence (Bowen

and Blackmon, 2003) or the idea of collusion (Gray and Schruijer, 2012), that were discussed in Chapter 2, are grounded in the idea that differences between people, and more to the point *perceptions* of differences, are a key determinant of speaking up behaviour. In addition, the literature on productive dialogue and creativity (Bechky, 2003; Tsoukas, 2009) suggested that it was from the mingling of different ways of thinking, associated with different communities of practice, that the benefits of creativity were derived.

That this particular inter-organisational project group was planning to meet regularly in fortnightly face to face meetings, rather than teleconference calls or Skype meetings, also offered an opportunity to investigate the social interactional patterns between project group members in a more embodied form, and for the additional development of fieldnote interpretations of pre- and post-meeting interactions based on my physical presence. This physical access turned out to be more important to the way in which the research study unfolded than I had originally anticipated. The initial idea had been that the individual participant accounts and video recordings would provide an interesting comparison and counterfoil to each other to highlight the meanings attributed by participants to staying silent within the project meetings, with participant observer fieldnotes almost acting as secondary contextual data (see Methodology section below). However, the queries and questions I jotted down in my fieldnotes in relation to my confusion about what was going on, became increasingly pertinent as I analysed the data, since they showed my own silences, my suspicions about what I was being told, and my development of possible alternative scenarios of what was happening. The interactions outside the project meetings became more important since they illustrated the different individual orientations to the fundamental aim of the project. Over time, as the post-meeting conversations

with individual participants started to refer more and more to splits and tensions in the group, the separate geographies, the wider set of organisational contacts and the different ways of working, which became manifest outside of the meetings, became more central to my study. The separateness of the council and university worlds became of greater interest.

4.4 Negotiating and maintaining access

The initial introduction to the project group came through an acquaintance who was a local City councillor at the time. She circulated to her fellow councillors my email call for projects (Appendix A) and received a reply from one of them who had been a student of the Open University and thus was keen to help. He forwarded my request to one of the project group members, Nina, at the County Council who responded and circulated my request to the rest of the group. Thus my access came via the council. However, my communication from that point progressed through Kerry in the university research team. I attended the next project group meeting and introduced myself and my research proposal, and participants agreed that, subject to individual conversations with me outside of the meeting, I could begin my research at the next meeting. After talking to each of the project group members either in person or on the phone, and encountering no significant concerns from them, I circulated the consent form (Appendix B) and began my research officially by recording the next project group meeting.

During the initial conversations about research access, I had discussed what extra role I might take on, offering my help to the project in return, and as thanks, for the participants' help with my research. The role that I agreed with Kerry was to join the volunteer group that the university team was developing to support the delivery of

the co-inquiry events. There was no clear gatekeeper for the research and no-one in any of the organisations expressed much interest in being informed of any research outputs. This was liberating in some ways but also meant that I was constantly thinking about the ethical procedures of what I could or should (not) be doing. There were a number of changes and uncertainties about access and the limits of my participant observation as my research progressed. This arose partly because of the change in my research as I started to better understand the splits in the group, and partly due to the development of new opportunities for interacting with members of the group. In particular, about halfway through the project a new opportunity emerged when Alison, the City Council representative, mentioned that she and the County Council representatives had decided to start meeting separately from the university team in order to talk about council-specific aspects of the work. I asked whether I could attend the meetings of this sub-group, since it seemed to be an opportunity to try and understand the specific concerns of the council side of the group that were felt to be outside of the scope of the full project meetings.

One important limit to my research, however, was being told by the university project lead that it would probably not be suitable for me to attend their *internal* university research meetings (see Section 5.1) but that it was perfectly acceptable to have full access to the *inter*-organisational meetings and to the co-inquiry work being delivered with the general public. It did not occur to me at that time that being blocked from attending those internal meetings would be of relevance to my research.³⁵

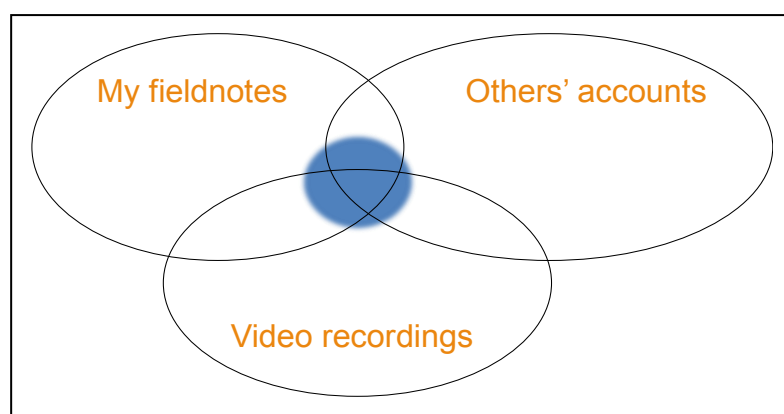
³⁵ I hope the data in Chapters 6-9 will clarify the significance of this limitation, as the tensions between council and university remits for the project work become described.

4.5 Methodology

The methodological premise was to develop an intertextual dialogue between what might be conceptualised as different types of narrative accounts: video recordings of the project group meeting interaction; my own participant observer account; and each project group member's separate interview accounts. I was seeking to use the discursive lens of participants' post-meeting accounts to explore how the discourse about the private activity of staying silent was positioned against the backdrop of our shared attendance in the meetings and the flow of social interaction across the project lifecycle. My fieldnotes then provided a personal backdrop, against which to compare the accounts from other participants to what I myself had noticed and my contextual understanding of what was going on. The video footage of project meetings offered an opportunity to re-view the meeting, using each participant's discursive account as a lens to try and understand how the account of silence might make sense as part of a new narrative from that particular participant's perspective. It was the difference between these forms of data that was of interest.

The phenomenon of silence therefore is situated not wholly within the video nor wholly within their, or my, account of the meeting, but emerges from a relationship between the forms of data (see Figure 1, below, with the phenomenon of silence depicted as the shape within the overlapping intersection of the various forms of data). Both the video and interview interaction are analysed as situated and as showing partial realities of an intersubjective nature, just as the fieldnotes also are acknowledged as my own partial perspective of being there.

FIGURE 1 - The positioning of silence as a phenomenon



In Section 4.7, I give an example of the way in which the different forms of data were combined. However, before I get to this, I describe in more detail the different individual methods for data generation. Due to the intersubjective nature of the research design, I use the term *data generation* rather than *data collection* in order to bring attention to the socially co-constructed nature of the data.

4.6 Methods

4.6.1 Interviews

Two types of interviews were carried out as part of this study. Firstly, semi-structured interviews (see Appendix C) were held with each project group member at the beginning and the end of the project. The first interview covered a number of introductory questions to get a general sense of the person, how s/he described her/himself, and the relationships with the other members of the group. The final exit interviews were audio-recorded to provide a detailed record in the participants' own words of their description and assessment of the project, their own silence and their reflection on any other issues or topics that had not been discussed over the project's lifespan.

The second type of interview was much more informal and variable over the course of the project. These interviews took the form of conversational chats after every meeting with each of the participants who had been present. For these, I made notes in shorthand to capture both my own questions and the participants' answers. I made a choice not to record these discussions as a more off-record contrast to the video-recorded meeting discussion, in order that participants could identify to me anything in the conversation that they did not want me to note down or use further in my research. In fact, this very rarely happened. These informal post-meeting conversations were arranged at a time convenient for each participant, and took place ranging from straight away after the meeting to a few days later. They were conducted either face to face or over the phone. Although I tried as much as possible to schedule face to face meetings, this was often impractical due to participants' short time availability or location. On one occasion the conversation consisted of an email exchange of thoughts with a project group participant. The shortest of these conversations lasted approximately 10 minutes; others took a good deal longer, especially when they were face to face (up to about 90 minutes). The average was about 15-20 minutes.

The post-meeting accounts, in which participants responded to my questions about their silence in the meeting - or in our later discussions, more generally in the project - became the starting point for my analysis and the pathway by means of which I returned to the video recordings and my fieldnotes of what was going on in the wider project, as I sought to understand the (re)-positioning work that was unfolding.

4.6.2 Participant observation

The fieldnotes that I generated in the field became more important than I had initially anticipated, as noted in Section 4.3. I made observational fieldnotes of the interactions before, during and after the project group meetings, but also of my volunteer involvement with the project work outside of these meetings. This included liaising with both the university side of the project work, helping to construct and conduct the community engagement events, and with the council side of the work, attending community talks (see Chapter 8) and sitting in on council officer meetings where the longer-term project work was discussed. There were a number of activities in which the interests of the two sides of the project group could not be so easily distinguished, for instance, as I distributed flyers collected from either the university department or council offices to deliver around the local area to advertise the community events. This work involved coordinating primarily between Kerry, in the university team, and Nina at the County Council. I also included in the fieldnote observations the email and other communications that occurred within the wider group, or between me and individual members of the group.

Fieldnotes were made initially in handwritten note form, with plenty of opportunities usually being available to jot down quickly for memory words or phrases. The notes were then typed up at the end of the day, using a Word document pro forma. I constructed the pro forma formatted with headings that prompted for Observations from that day, reflection on Theory, reflection on Methodology, and then Other notes in order to record my own feelings, miscellaneous thoughts on questions to follow up, misgivings about the research, and so on. The idea of the pro forma was to be able to insert the fieldnotes into NVivo with data nodes automatically connected to the different headings which would then collect together the full record over time of

Observations (etc) in date order. While this worked well to some extent, the output led to me noticing the rather uncertain division of content between the different headings, and in particular doubts about what I should classify as observation rather than as my own musings and suspicions in the Other section of the pro forma. It was during the process of first reviewing the fieldnotes ordered according to these different nodes in NVivo that the implications of my own confusion about participants' discourse became developed, and that led to further questions about the different stories and individual interpretations of what was going on in the project.

4.6.3 Video and audio recordings of project group meetings

Because the role for video recordings is significantly different to their use within ethnomethodological / conversation analysis (EM/CA) (for example, see Llewellyn, 2011), it is worth being more precise about the positioning and role of the video recordings in my research. The video data being sought in the EM/CA paradigm is that of a clear, consistent, objective version of 'what happened' in social interaction with an ironing-out of as many of the subjective elements as possible (Heath, Hindmarsh and Luff, 2010). In contrast, my study used video footage and the related audio recordings in a more interpretative and intersubjective way, in order to review different perspectives on the same encounter. The people represented in the video recordings are individuals with whom I was involved in an ongoing working relationship at the time of recording. They are not (substitutable) representative human forms engaged in an impartial strip of interaction, but people whose phenomenological experience I was seeking to understand.

Haw and Hadfield (2011) discuss the different positions in research that video can take - for reflective, projective and/or participative purposes - in which it features as

a tool but not the main data. Pink (2009) similarly discusses the elicitation uses for visual materials in her ethnographic work, distinguishing between using the medium to *represent* sensory experience and to *research* such experience. In my research, video was being used both to represent and return to a social interaction in a replayed form and to reflect on an experience that the footage does not directly show. These dual functions are discussed, with some reflection on the effectiveness of the methodology, in Section 4.7.

The videos made were of the only shared social events in which all project group members participated. Since it was communication within this group that was a primary research interest, the choice of what to record was straightforward. The reason for making video recordings was that video provides retrospective observation (Muntanyola-Saura, 2012) and a chance to 'return' to the detailed interaction of the meeting, to apply participants' accounts of silence to the interaction, and to explore how the new story sits alongside previous stories of what happened. The specific account, therefore, provided the frame for analysis and rendered some aspects of the video recording relevant and other aspects irrelevant *in that particular pass through the footage*. Each individual account therefore highlighted different moments of interplay of interest.

The video recordings were generated via one static camera that was positioned on a tripod to cover as much of the participants' interaction in the meeting room as possible. An additional audio-recording device was positioned in the middle of the table, in case the video recording's sound was not clear. The recording devices were turned on as the meeting was called to order and turned off as it was officially closed. These beginning and end points were often unclear however, and the

conversations captured on the recordings spill over into discussion about other matters.

Heath, Hindmarsh and Luff (2010) discuss how the presence of a video recorder may affect the social interaction of participants. While they note that other authors have suggested that the presence of a camera affects participants' reactions and interactions, they themselves suggest that this may be highly variable (for instance, roving cameras may feel more intrusive; and there may be a heightened sensitivity and awareness about the camera at moments when it is switched on or when new people enter into a room and notice it). Heath, Hindmarsh and Luff (2010) advocate that the influence that the camera has had (or not) should be addressed empirically by noting where participants do react in a different way. There are certainly instances in the video recordings where participants can be observed to act self-consciously, most notably at the beginning of meetings when people were choosing where to sit and discussing whether they would be staring into the camera, and if they minded this or not. It is also noticeable in the interactions during an argument in the group, discussed in Chapter 8, that Kerry, the university project manager, has hidden her face from the camera during the argument. In that particular meeting, she was sitting facing the camera. At the start of the meeting, there had been a moment where she had acted more officially than she usually did in welcoming everyone to the meeting; an action that other participants picked up on and teased her lightly about, as playing to the camera.

However, it might have been that my presence, as a researcher and overheard audience, was just as much, or more, of an influence on participants' behaviour than the presence of the camera, as people oriented towards me both at the beginning of meetings, asking how my research was coming on, and whether I was finding what I

needed from the data, and at certain moments during the meetings, whether rude comments about others might be noted by me and so on. I usually sat in the meeting with my back towards the camera, thus prioritising the recording of the interaction between other members of the group. The recordings did not by any means provide perfect coverage of the interplay in the meetings, with participants moving in and out of camera shot when, for instance, they moved back in their chairs, or were hidden by other participants leaning in across the table. However, I did not want to use multiple cameras in varying positions around the room, since I felt this would have emphasised the micro-interaction of the meeting, and the aim of generating a somehow 'correct' rendition of interactional processes, at the expense of the more important emphasis on the discussions about staying silent and the study of the ongoing flow of relationships over the project lifecycle.

4.7 An example of the dialogue between video, fieldnotes and interview data

The example below shows how fieldnotes, video recordings and post-meeting conversational interviews were interwoven, and how the processes of data generation and analysis overlapped during fieldwork. This particular example has been chosen because it relates to a situation not included elsewhere in the thesis, where the post-meeting interview conversation included some reference to a strip of interaction which, according to the participant's account, I should be able to identify in the video recordings. The example illustrates my attempt to interpret a narrative provided by one participant Kerry, the university team's project manager, which does not seem to correspond either to my own direct experience of the meeting or to my later reading of the video images.

About two-thirds of the way through the project, Kerry told me after a meeting that she had not asked Paul, one of the local authority officers - and the only local authority representative at this particular meeting - whether he approved of the project planning for the next event, even though she felt he looked really uncomfortable during the conversation about it. She continued by saying that this was the reason she had asked him later in the meeting if there were any other issues he wanted to raise. Her silence therefore concerned a moment when she did not enquire about Paul's discomfort, compensated by a later invitation to him to raise anything that he would like to.

My fieldnotes of that meeting do not include any reference of my own to Paul looking uncomfortable. Nor is it something that Paul related independently in my interview with him after that meeting. When I watched the video again, during the footage of the discussion about the workshop, I did not detect any indication, either through his speech or body language, of Paul's discomfort. Kerry's description of asking Paul if there were any other issues he wanted to raise can, however, be matched to a strip of interaction that occurs towards the end of the meeting, at a point when they have just fixed a date for another event. Her question seems to be prompted after she looks down at her notebook for a few seconds and runs her eye down the page, apparently checking for further agenda items or issues for discussion.

I did not want to deny Kerry's post-meeting account, to subjugate her view to my own, but I was finding it difficult to read Kerry's account of her actions as being directly responsive to Paul's discomfort. On second viewing of the full video, the fact that Kerry's line manager is absent from this meeting caught my attention. Her talk about discomfort was now interesting to me for a different reason. She talks at the beginning about interacting with other research groups also doing collaborative

inquiry work, and how she found their work incomprehensible. Kerry is having to describe and account all by herself in this meeting for the consultation events they are planning: she is using the speech genre of the university's research expertise without her line manager to guide her, possibly for the first time. The more I review the video footage of the meeting and read its content against previous discussions with Kerry, the greater the sense I get that it is not really Paul with whom Kerry is in dialogue: her talk seems to be reflecting other conversations and concerns from previous situations.

The following is taken from my fieldnote of a phone conversation with Kerry about four weeks after the meeting in question. At this point in the conversation, we had just started talking about how I was still busy with the transcription of that meeting, and what I was noticing from it:

I said, 'I've been really interested [while doing the transcript] because there were a couple of times [in the video interaction] when you referred to something which wasn't really in reply to what Paul had said, but referred to what you thought he was thinking, and that was interesting given what you had said afterwards to me about the conversation. For instance, [in the video] you were saying "don't worry about it [the consultation event] being too complicated". I had been wondering if you had already been worrying about that yourself and if the design team had been talking about it.'

'Yes definitely,' she said immediately, 'Yes, was that the meeting when we had just come back from [European trip]?''

'Yes I think so.'

She said, 'We'd had one meeting and there was only a week to go, and it was a nightmare.'

Of course, this is an intersubjectively-produced line that I proposed and Kerry accepted and added to, through the reference to the European trip. What emerged from this point was a different way of talking between me and Kerry. Triggered by my response to the video footage, a theme of competence and its effect on speaking-up behaviour started to develop more strongly in our discussions: the stress of feeling incompetent and unknowledgeable, and how this inclines people towards keeping quiet, how her stress changed as she started to understand more about co-inquiry, and could better explain and justify what the university team was doing. Neither in Kerry's initial account of what she kept silent about in the meeting nor in the video-recorded conversation was there any reference to stress. It is a line that became increasingly coherent however as the data accumulated, and as the idea of stress became linked to the positioning of being new in the team. During her exit interview at the end of the project, Kerry noted:

None of those events was designed until the last one had taken place which was also what made it very stressful ..because it's like, two weeks before we didn't know what that exhibition was, we were responding to what had come out of the workshop, two weeks before, we went to [Europe], came back, bam. It was quite hard for me because at .. I didn't really know what I was doing ... I you know I, now I can talk about co-inquiry till the cows come home.

Overall in the research study, without the video recordings' detail to compare to the individual accounts and fieldnotes, I would have been unlikely to be prompted to ask

about some of the potential lines of inquiry that were not immediately made relevant by the participants themselves. The combining of these different types of data did therefore seem to be productive. The first experience of the project meetings - as the meetings unfolded in real time - was captured in my fieldnotes, and emphasised the emotional content and my own embodied thoughts and observations. The subsequent experiences of it, in video-replay form, with the benefit of the post-meeting interview data, produced new and alternative ways of reading the footage. These new readings highlighted the complex and sensitive inter-personal negotiations that were impacting upon how the project unfolded.

While other authors have given objects directly to the research participants to encourage their talk (e.g. Slutskaya et al., 2012), the use of video in this case was almost an elicitation technique in reverse. The participants pointed to how the object of the video-recording should be viewed, and I as the researcher re-analysed. The elicitation process arose in me as a reflexive prompt. My comparison of participants' interview accounts, the meanings they gave to the interactions that had occurred, against the video recording raised more questions that could then be asked. My inferences came from a dialogue in which I was actively involved. I was also there in the interaction, the video recordings, and therefore had a reflexive contribution to make in the discussion about our shared experience of the project and the project meetings.

Nevertheless, there were also occasions where participants' accounts simply had no correlation to the video-recorded meeting interaction, where no reference was made to the detail of the project group meeting, and in such instances, the video recording was not utilised directly to explore the account further. One of the disadvantages of producing the video recordings was that possibly more attention was paid, both by

me and participants, to the issue of silence purely within the meetings rather than within the social interaction of the project more generally.³⁶

4.8 Reflexivity

Cunliffe (2003, p.989) suggests that radical reflexivity:

'turns the reflexive act upon ourselves to deconstruct our own constructions of realities, identities and knowledge, and highlight the intersubjective and indexical nature of meaning'

Such reflexivity is a second-order, ontological issue rather than a first-order issue of analysing how others construct their social realities. It is this radical reflexivity that I aim to pursue in this study, as I elaborate below.

In the last few decades, postmodernist and post-structuralist (Alvesson, 2002) approaches to qualitative research have critiqued the idea that social science can be objectively grounded on unproblematic truth claims given the researcher's inherent involvement in the processes of data generation and analysis (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000; Gergen, 1994; Linstead, 1993). Reflexivity has been widely discussed as one response to this critique, conceptualised in a variety of ways (see Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000; Cunliffe, 2003; Hardy and Clegg, 1997; Hibbert et al., 2010). In ethnographic research, reflexivity has become something of a core concern as a methodology characterised traditionally by the importance of the researcher's participant-observer status (Pink, 2009; Van Maanen, 2006) - notwithstanding the ever changing definition of what and where the ethnographic 'field' might be (Pritchard, 2011).

³⁶ Another disadvantage was the significant time spent on viewing, transcribing and re-viewing the recordings.

While some approaches to reflexivity have conceptualised it as a correction for, and hence a solution to, researcher bias that facilitates an objectivist stance (see the discussion in Pink, 2009), intersubjective research approaches to reflexivity embrace the idea of the embedded and embodied researcher (Cunliffe, 2011). That is, rather than being an inherent problem, the specific relationships that the researcher develops with research participants, and the process by which data and meaning emerge within these relationships, become part of the study (Chia, 1996; Gergen, 1994).

It is here that Bakhtin's ideas of dialogic discourse become relevant as he shows the ontological and methodological importance of relational responsiveness (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984; Shotter, 2008). Bakhtinian dialogism moves ethnographic research towards a relational methodology that recognises the researcher's influence not only on the way in which participants become textually depicted, but also on the fundamental shaping of participants' responses (Belova, King and Sliwa, 2008).

Reflexive attention is drawn to the living, evolving relationship between people, to noticing the choices made by the researcher in working out the best way to proceed as research unfolds, and how both self and other are being shaped and differentiated through the emergent research process (Shotter, 2008, 2010). The researcher is no longer positioned as the monologic and authoritative hero-narrator (Bakhtin, 1984): instead, a polyphonic (Bakhtin, 1984) array of different viewpoints and voices is sought for exploration by the researcher who is her/himself also embedded, as one of the voices, in the social reality being studied (Asch and Connor, 1994).

My expectation of my initial positioning in the research was not as a stranger for whom the task of ethnography was one of attempting to come to terms with a new and exotic culture (Van Maanen, 1995). Rather, I was anticipating being able to

understand the work in which the research participants were engaged through having worked myself on similar issues to those that the project group was addressing. I have previously lived and worked in the area in question, I am of the same ethnicity, a roughly similar age and educational background as the project group participants. What I did not know about, however, was what participants' understanding of silence might be.

Different aspects of my identity emerged during the research process as particularly pertinent for the development of my relationships with the various project group members. Through my previous work career in environmental organisations, it turned out I had friendships in common with Martin, the landscape designer. Meanwhile, our experiences of local government partnerships, urban regeneration and community development projects became topics of conversation with the council officers. My novice academic status as PhD student positioned me in relation to Sean, the university senior lecturer, as someone who he could help and advise, and in relation to Kerry, as a newcomer to the university team, as someone with whom I could commiserate over the complexities of the research process, and how academic life compared to public sector work. Such identities undoubtedly had an impact on the responses that participants offered to my questions about silence. It undoubtedly also affected how I heard and interpreted people's accounts.

The reflexive implications of Bakhtin's writing also extend to the way in which meaning is developed from data texts: what Bakhtin's dialogic theory points to is the shifting meaning of a text given the changing conditions in which it may be read, to the location of meaning residing not within a text but emerging from its local, historically contingent, intertextual (Kristeva, cited in Allen, 2000) relationship to other texts (Bakhtin, 1981). Who is interpreting, when, and how, become reflexively

implicated in the process by which meaning emerges (Hardy and Clegg, 1997). I move on to this issue in the next section on data analysis.

4.9 Data analysis and coding

The intended analytic approach to data was to use discourse analysis as a means to explore the construction of silence, to understand the way in which the idea was given social meaning and was made sensible in situated accounts across the lifecycle of the project. Data sources were coded within NVivo computer software, and the final coding framework is in Appendix E.

The first task in the move from data generation to data analysis was to identify what to conceptualise and include as discursive constructions of silence, given the often unclear and indirect responses that participants gave to my questions, the informal tone of the discussions in the post-meeting conversations (where did the response stop and start?), and the ongoing nature of the conversation over days and weeks of fieldwork, where previous conversations with participants were returned to and further elaborated. The first coding exercise after reading and listening to source materials a number of times was to identify key passages of text within interview data and fieldnotes that would serve as the initial starting point for analysis from the much larger dataset of material. I used initial coding (Saldaña, 2009) for these key passages, coded as 'talk about silence and voice', in order to be able to retrieve and compare participants' discourse over the period of the project. Within this first category, I coded for 'talk about silence' as a more specific category where the data more closely related to the individual experience or practice of silence or conditions in which silence might be appropriate. I also coded 'transitions silence-voice or

voice-silence.' in which participants talked about the movement from one to the other.

These initial codes, particularly the 'talk about silence' were used as the starting point for different processes of data interrogation linked to the research questions. Firstly, the lack of clarity that emerged in the responses to the questions I asked about silence in the post-meeting interviews prompted further thought about the fundamental concept of silence that participants might have been using. I further segmented the data to try to identify the different types of silence (temporally specific acts in which particular moments in the meeting were identified; longer, more indeterminate states of engagement; etc) that were being discursively constructed by participants. Because I wanted to separate the analysis of my own silence from my interpretation of other participants' discourse, I also used separate codes for my own reflexive examples of silence and my interpretations of others' silence. In addition, I segmented the participants' 'talk about silence and voice' category into talk 'in general', 'in this project', and 'in this particular meeting'. The last of these additional categories ('silence in this particular meeting') was used as the starting point to compare participants' post-meeting accounts of meetings with the video-recorded interaction and my own fieldnotes.

Because it very quickly transpired that participants' accounts required some method of interpretation that was more than a discourse analysis that concentrated purely on the text, the next analytic stage involved a much greater use of analytic memos (Saldaña, 2009) to develop the conceptual thinking. One of the helpful contributions for trying to understand the accounts of silence came from outside the field of organisation studies, in the work of Mazzei (2003, 2004, 2007) in educational research, in which she uses a deconstructionist approach on interview data to listen

to and seek out what is *not* said. Through repeat readings of the data retrieved via the coded categories, to try and understand the categories of who and what was being made relevant, the idea developed of elaborating the range of different addressees, or voices in the text to whom participants seemed to be directing their accounts (rather than just to me). It was primarily in the analytic memos that the intertextual approach to the data was developed, to bring together and analyse the full dataset in which these voices appeared.

Subsequent to this first round of analytic memo development, I thus reviewed and coded the wider data set of materials for the different stakeholders that were appearing as characters in the stories, and the qualities of the relationships which were being constructed in different social settings, and for the functions that silence was being given. While one of the important uses of NVivo was for data management, retrieval and coding, the matrix query function of the software was helpful to compare data between individuals (for instance, to compare talk about general situations of speaking up or staying silent, or to compare specific accounts of silence across different time periods). What emerged from such comparisons was similar types of relational positioning being taken up by a speaker but with different stakeholders as characters, and with different functions being attributed to silence in the local situation in which the account was being constructed.

4.9.1 The tools for discourse analysis

The use of discursive positioning theory as a way of developing the relational aspects of silence came out of the analytic process described above. In this study, I draw on Davies and Harré's (1990) paper, 'Positioning: the discursive production of selves' as a means to operationalise Bakhtin's dialogic discourse. In order to set up

the discussion and justify my use of discursive positioning, I introduce firstly some of the alternative options that I considered and rejected for use.

My research aim was to understand the social significance attributed to the individual practice of staying silent as the project work was being delivered. Thus, I was interested in the discursive practices used, the patterns and the variability in this discourse, over the period of fieldwork. Interpretative repertoires (Potter and Wetherall, 1987) and ideological dilemmas (Billig et al., 1988) would have been potential theoretical approaches. Discursive positioning, interpretative repertoires and ideological dilemmas all focus on the 'action orientation' (Wetherall and Potter, 1988, p.168) of discourse. It is discursive practice that is studied, with issues of variability and indexicality being foregrounded, and with links that connect a local situation to a wider socio-historic context in terms of social significance. However, the idea of interpretative repertoires is that they identify mutually exclusive ways of talking and accounting for action (Potter and Wetherall, 1987), which need some form of management and discursive solution when used alongside each other by, for instance, being separated into different passages of talk or through the participant's orientation to the inconsistency that is being displayed. In the idea of ideological dilemmas (Billig et al., 1988), similarly, what is prioritised is the availability of contrasting ways of thinking about the same topic and a choice between a range of ideological resources (Edley, 2001). Yet it was not clear from the initial analysis of data that the different resources that the study participants were using were necessarily incompatible with, and separate from, each other, but were instead more like different narrative lenses that could be applied to better interpret the account (or the fragment of the account) being offered. Furthermore, the type of data generated was important to consider. The development of interpretative repertoires, for

instance, is associated with a close textual reading of detailed transcripts produced from recordings of participant's accounts (Potter and Wetherall, 1987) which was not the type of data I was generating in the post-meeting informal conversational interviews, for reasons elaborated in Section 4.6.1.

In contrast, I suggest that Davies and Harré's (1990) paper is particularly useful for analytic purposes for a number of reasons. Nevertheless, I am drawing on their paper and their terminology of a storyline in a way that is somewhat at odds with their own use. I elaborate below their theory of discursive positioning, how I am using it and where I depart from their original use.

4.9.2 Discursive positioning and storylines

Davies and Harré (1990, p.48) use discursive positioning as a means to analyse the production of discursive selves, arguing that:

'In telling a fragment of his or her autobiography, a speaker assigns parts and characters in the episodes described, both to themselves and to other people, including those taking part in the conversation. [...] By giving people parts in the story, whether it be explicit or implicit, a speaker makes available a subject position which the other speaker in the normal course of events would take up.'

Discursive positioning theory emphasises the fleeting and fluid relationships between the speaker and his/her immediate interlocutors, and between him/her and the other characters who appear in the speaker's talk. The fragment of a storyline that is invoked in an act of positioning conjures up the rest of the narrative of which it is a part, and it is through the comprehension of the storyline that a particular type

of speech *act* is understood to have taken place from the speech *action* at that point in the conversation.

The poststructuralist paradigm that Davies and Harré (1990) draw on asserts that discourse has constitutive force but also that individuals are able to exert some choice in their discursive practice. Davies and Harré (1990, p.46), for instance, note that:

'discourse [...] is that in terms of which phenomena are made determinate'

with

'many and contradictory discursive practices that each person could engage in.'

Therefore, the way in which Davies and Harré describe and use the idea of a storyline is as a narrative resource in which there are recognisable events, characters and moral dilemmas. It is from a particular storyline as a culturally recognisable and socially useable resource, in which particular categories and relationships are understood (of how one should help a sick person, for example, a storyline developed by Davies and Harré in their paper), that specific 'rights, obligations and expectations' (p.52) can be interpreted for the various subject positions being allocated by the speaker. Davies and Harré note that the understanding of such rights, obligations and expectations are developed from a person's subjective history and his/her understanding of 'social structure and the roles that are recognisably allocated to people within those structures', which have some coercive force 'to the extent that to be recognisably and acceptably a person we must operate within their terms' (p.52). Although Davies and Harré note that the second speaker may take up

the subject position in the storyline offered by the first speaker, there is also a possibility that s/he will not, due for instance to not understanding or being blind to the storyline being used, or because s/he wants to resist such positioning and/or to offer a new positioning within a different storyline.

There are a number of useful features about this theory as a way of developing my data. Firstly, their theoretical framework allows for my own participant observer involvement in the research by using discursive positioning theory's emphasis on the relationship between the speaker, those within the story being narrated *and* the interlocutors to whom the story is being told. There is furthermore, some correspondence between Davies and Harré's theory and Bakhtin's theory of dialogic discourse: between the other characters in these storylines and Bakhtin's idea of addressees (Bakhtin, 1986) which shape the individual's (anticipatory and responsive) utterances; and with both authors having similar conceptualisations of the communicative process in which discursive meaning-making is a shared activity in a local and situated dialogic encounter (Bakhtin, 1981).³⁷

Davies and Harré are quite clear that their paper is intended to 'contribute to the understanding of personhood' (1990, p.46) and 'the multiplicities of selfhood' (p.47) or subject positions. However, I am using their ideas for a different focus in this thesis. The importance of discursive positioning here is in what is being proposed as consequential to the act of positioning in terms of the accompanying 'attendant rights, obligations and expectations'. It is not so much the construction of

³⁷ See also Larrain and Haye (2012b) and their use of positioning in their elaboration of Bakhtin's dialogism.

personhood per se but the *required action* that results from it - the constructed requirement, or advisability, or benefit of staying silent - that I emphasise.³⁸

To summarise then, in the accounts that I analyse for this research I am positioned within the conversation. Thus, it is my own reflexive understanding of the positioning work being done by the speaker, my resisting or conforming to the positions being offered to me, the positioning of the cast of other characters and voices, and the storylines that are being drawn on, through which my interpretation of the form and function of silence is developed. Silence became developed as a relational product that was given form and function both within the social interaction in which the account was being constructed, as well as within the social interaction which was being narrated. Some of the analytic work relied on hunches (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996) and an embodied responsiveness to the dialogue (Shotter, 2008) developed from my fieldnote data about my emotions and feelings of being in that social situation: my suspicions, my feelings of discomfort, concern or enjoyment of the conversation, and so on. By examining the various acts of positioning in the data, I pieced together the particular types of relationships, rights, obligations and expectations that are used to make the idea of silence relevant. Through analysing the variations in discursive positioning over the lifecycle of the project, I pieced together the temporally specific fragments of storylines over the six months, and how the practice might be expected to change over time. In this way, I developed the idea of storylines of silence, using the terminology of a storyline to capture the temporal variability of discursive practices over the duration of the project.

³⁸ It is also for this reason that I did not develop this thesis in terms of identity work (see for instance, Ainsworth and Hardy (2004)).

From the patterning in the data, three different ways of talking about silence seemed to emerge, in which three distinct types of relationship were implicated with associated phrases and terminology, and in which silence was given some social significance through being associated with the fulfilment (or not) of particular social rights, obligations or duties. Appendix E, Figure 2, gives an example of the modelling of codes and concepts that led to the current three storylines.

4.10 Transcription

In this section, I discuss the rationale behind the transcription of the video footage and the exit interviews, and the role that the transcriptions played. Appendix D covers the transcription conventions used.

The purpose of transcribing was two-fold. The first purpose was to create a text of the project meetings as an object to use at certain points within the data generation phase, to show and discuss with the participants and to check for issues of sensitivity and requirements for anonymisation in my use of the data. I brought the first draft of the August meeting's transcript (the first meeting I video-recorded) to my early rounds of interviews to show people how I was representing the group and the meeting conversations. This was while I was still getting to know people and seeking to establish my place and research purpose in the group. The final version of the same transcript was also shown to participants at exit interview as an example of how I was anonymising the details, so that they could comment and request any further alterations. This was as a form of sign-off, since I considered the transcripts would be the only form of data that may become shared later with other researchers (see Ethics) and I wanted to ensure that all participants were satisfied with that outcome.

Over time, the transcripts became a topic of conversation between me and the group participants as people enquired about how I was getting on with the work. While such conversation had some advantages - for instance, it afforded an opportunity for me to raise follow-up issues as a consequence of their inquiry - it also placed an emphasis on the communication purely within the meetings, rather than communication more widely in the project delivery.

The transcriptions, secondly, aided my data analysis by translating the video footage representations into a written form less cumbersome to combine with other data in Nvivo which meant that I could annotate, code and create references and links to the full collection of data materials in order to build analytic memos. The transcribed files were used to mark codes and comments generated from my viewing of the video footage. The electronic version of written transcripts also proved easier for locating strips of interaction, searching for a particular remembered phrase, for instance, which was less quickly located by fast forwarding or rewinding the video or audio recordings themselves.

I started the transcription process for the meeting recordings while still in the field, with the aim of trying to produce at least a rough draft of the meeting conversation as quickly as possible, so that I could discuss issues, raised either in the meeting's recorded content or in the transcribing process, with participants. It was a deliberate decision to carry out the transcription myself of the recorded conversations of the meetings, as a way of becoming closer to the data. Indeed, one of the consequences of my decision to do the transcription was the attention I was required to pay to the different representations of voices (Jaffe, 2007). I realised that, in order to make Nina's commentary clear, for instance, I was inserting lots of commas to mark the sub-clauses, the false starts, the repetitions, the somewhat hedged or veiled lines of

thought. For Sean, the transcription included the pauses while he constructed the fluent and imaginative turns of phrase that characterise his talk. For Alison, I queried whether I should write in the word that she probably meant to say rather than the one that she actually said (I did not - all her original words remain).

4.11 Writing, representation and validity

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.191) suggest that:

'ethnography is produced as much by how we write as by the processes of data collection and analysis'.

The style of writing in this thesis may be described as a confessional tale (Van Maanen, 1995) inasmuch as I try to show my own involvement in the work. However, this confession is much more fundamental than simply adding some explication about how the fieldwork was conducted to an otherwise realist tale (Van Maanen, 1995): this is for reasons of intersubjectivity in the research design that I have previously discussed (see Section 4.1). In this respect, the best description of my intention in the structure and the writing style adopted in this thesis was to develop a polyphonic perspective (Bakhtin, 1984), in which the voices of the other project group members are represented as separate characters with independent views. I have tried within the data-oriented chapters (Chapters 6 to 9) to show how different individual perspectives on the social interaction were developed by participants, and to give sufficient detail of the interactions to show not only how I came to the interpretations that I did, but also to allow the reader to develop possibly another perspective to my own.

Nevertheless, it is of course my interpretation which is developed through these chapters. The claims that I can make about the data and the theoretical contribution is that they must be inevitably provisional and directed to practical theory (Cunliffe, 2002) rather than seeking for a universalist, underlying patterning of social behaviour. Golden-Biddle and Locke (1993) discuss authenticity, plausibility and criticality as validity criteria for ethnographic texts: it is against these criteria and the notion of provisional understanding (Shotter, 2008; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002) that I wish the thesis to be assessed, rather than against universal truth claims. I try to present in the data the range of views and the complexity of the data that allow for such criteria to be applied.

Van Maanen (1995, p.73) notes that there are many 'strategic choices and active constructions' made in ethnographic writing. There are two particular strategic choices that I discuss below in order to make more transparent the processes by which the text in this thesis was developed.

4.11.1 Organising the structure: four data chapters

One of the aims of my research was to explore silence as a situated phenomenon. Therefore, I wanted to find a way to write about the phenomenon in a way that would somehow maintain the embeddedness and complexity of the individual accounts. This was no easy decision, since I had to choose which accounts to prioritise for detailed analysis, in what order to present them, and so on. Inevitably, due to reasons of space, the structure chosen has meant that other accounts have been omitted. One option that I discarded was to structure the data chapters according to the three separate storylines, rather than as four chapters around different agenda

items: however this would have lost the integral complexity of how the storylines are woven into individual accounts.

The empirical data for this thesis is now presented in four chapters, each of which is based around what I am calling an 'agenda item', that is, a different topic of conversation or substantive focus of discussion within the project delivery. These four agenda items were chosen due to the intensity of analytic coding around them, which suggested that they constituted key arenas of social interaction where participants' accounts of silence could be presented. I am hoping that what I may have lost in terms of clarity of theme, as the reader moves through the chapters, is compensated for by a sensitivity to contextual complexity and rich description.

Through the structuring device of 'agenda items', I bring together one or more individual accounts of silence constructed within the post-meeting conversations and the contextualising data associated with these accounts. This contextualising data comes from transcripts of the video recordings and exit interview recordings, and from my fieldnotes. To show similarities and differences between participants' discursive constructions, I bring in other accounts and conversations with other participants that highlight similar issues. Three of the topics - Chapters 7, 8 and 9 - were literally agenda items at one or more of the project group meetings. In Chapter 6, I use the term as a metaphor, to bring together all the data about the early days of the project. I bring together the storied (Czarniawska, 2004) data from interviews that relate to a time in the group interaction when I was not present, right at the beginning of setting up the project.

While the four agenda items might initially be seen as illustrative of different points in the project delivery process, ranging from the beginning of the project (before I

joined) to the very end as this first project stage is officially brought to a close, this association is deceiving, since each of the four data chapters brings together texts that were generated at different time points over the project. It is at the level of the aggregated data, through which participants socially interact, recollect, re-enact and/or reinterpret past interactions and meaning-making, that the agenda item becomes relevant and structurally useful for the discussion about silence. Such an aggregation of data from different times in fieldwork, nevertheless, has a certain effect that radically transforms the sense of emergent process in the field, since it collapses the sense of temporality and some of the ways in which my interpretations developed and changed over time. Most notably, the decision to incorporate text generated later in the project within Chapter 6 means that some of the unfolding drama and mystery that was involved in my research journey is lost in the narrative.³⁹ The decision to include this material in Chapter 6 was in order to provide all the relevant material in one place so that what I felt, on balance, to be a more important intertextual reading could be made and assessed by the reader.

4.11.2 Using extracts from the data

I have used extracts from the data recorded during fieldwork within the body of Chapters 6 to 9 as empirical evidence for the points being made in the thesis. I have tried to provide for the reader some idea of how the empirical data was co-constructed in social interaction, and so have retained as much as I felt practical my own interventions and action in the conversation. Three types of data extracts have been used in the thesis: transcripts of the video-recordings of project meetings;

³⁹ See for instance Section 6.3.1 and the text in which Nina talked about vulnerability. This was something of an 'aha!' moment as I felt that she had finally revealed something that helped me piece together the wider picture of what she was having to deal with. Adding this in the first data chapter loses that sense of dramatic denouement that I felt, and weakens the authenticity (Golden-Biddle and Locke, 1993) of the writing in relation to the fieldwork experience.

transcripts from the recorded exit interviews with individual participants; and informal conversations recorded in fieldnotes. I clarify below how I have presented these three forms of data, and why I chose the presentational style for each.

The extracts from recordings of project meetings and exit interviews have been taken from the original transcripts produced during fieldwork or shortly afterwards, when I was preparing data for uploading into NVivo. I aim to produce a naturalized mode of writing of these texts that allows the reader to follow without too much difficulty the conversation, as in a novel or play's dialogue, while still being sufficiently denaturalized (Bucholz, 2000) to reflect something of the differences in participants' speech styles. Attention has been paid to adding non-verbal elements of interaction - bodily gestures, postures and gazes between participants - in the extracts taken from video recordings where this detail is an important aspect of the analysis, since the reader does not have the same access as I do to the visual component of the video recording.⁴⁰ For both types of transcript extracts, I have used indentation and closer line spacing than the double spacing of the thesis, in order to highlight the extract from the rest of the text. Speakers are identified by name in the extracts from the project meeting recordings. Where the extracts are taken from the recordings of exit interviews, the speaker's name has usually been omitted, unless the extract contains a series of exchanges between me and the participant, in which case speakers are identified to avoid any confusion.

The third type of data that is used as evidence comes from fieldnotes, used both to set the context and to provide closer detail of informal conversations with participants. In order to set the contextual scene, there are places in the thesis where I summarise and essentially rewrite the original fieldnote for reasons of word length

⁴⁰ Appendix D notes the transcription conventions used.

and clear narrative progression, where these summaries appear prior to more detailed data extracts.⁴¹ I have also used extracts from fieldnotes to offer more fine-grained detail of the informal conversations that took place with research participants, and this detail is presented in two different ways. Firstly, I have used short extracts from the fieldnote of a participant's talk during which there was no interruption from me.⁴² In this case, I have indented and used closer spacing as per the transcript extracts discussed above, since both types of extracts stand as evidence and illustration for the point being discussed. However, I have always noted in the text the source of the extract so that the reader can be clear on this point. It should be noted that the extracts from video and audio recordings contain the (audible, replayable) hesitations, false starts and so on, whereas the extracts from my fieldnotes, that were recorded by hand, do not retain the faltering aspects of communication that might have taken place in the field. In the second use of more detailed fieldnote data, I have kept the data within the main body of the text, without indentation or changes in line spacing. I have done this where the extract is more conversational in style, consisting of exchanges between the research participant and me, primarily because of the awkwardness of trying to find a separate distinguishing presentational style. I wanted to develop and weave in quite a close analysis of the conversational exchange recorded in the fieldnote but did not want to treat differently my own and the participant's utterances, since they were part of the same sequentially-ordered conversation. Instead of changing the visual style of the text, I have sought instead to represent the distinction between the original fieldnote data and my subsequent analysis of this data firstly through the change in tense - the fieldnote data is in past tense, my analysis in present tense - and, secondly, by being as explicit as possible

⁴¹ See for instance the beginning of Section 7.1.

⁴² The first example of this occurs on page 140 in Section 6.1.

about the source of the data within the chapter section.⁴³ The end product of using these extracts therefore is a less clear visual delineation between the fieldnote and my subsequent interpretative treatment of it in the thesis, and I appreciate that here it may be more difficult to distinguish my own voice from that of my research participants, and my analysis from the original fieldnote data.⁴⁴

4.11.3 Anonymising and fictionalising

In the thesis, I have fictionalised certain elements, particularly geographical features and certain characteristics of the project work, and used pseudonyms for names and some nouns in an attempt to ensure that the location of the research, the organisations and individuals involved are not easily recognisable. The fictionalization was checked with participants at the exit interview stage by inspecting a final version of one of the transcripts of the meetings, and by disseminating a short summary of my interpretation of the research story and what I thought some of the conclusions were from my research.

I have not used data that participants requested to be kept confidential. In addition, using my judgment about the types of concerns mentioned by individuals during the fieldwork I have made some choices to exclude other data that might have been hurtful to certain participants, or that I would have felt uncomfortable about using if participants read this thesis. While I did not intend to seek out the participants' thoughts on the final draft, my test on this matter was whether I would be willing and able to justify my writing if project group members happened to read it.

⁴³ An example of this is in Section 9.6, where I present the conversation between me and Nina that I recorded in a fieldnote after the December project group meeting. Three time periods are present and the intertextual nature of the analysis draws on all three: there is the analytic 'present' in which the thesis is being written; there is a recollection in the thesis of the fieldnote's 'present' (of December); and there is a recollection within the fieldnote of the first post-meeting conversation that was influencing how I was interpreting Nina's words in the December fieldnote.

⁴⁴ This was a point explicitly discussed at the viva examination for this thesis.

4.12 Ethics

The ethics committee approval of my research was straightforward. The consent discussions that I had with participants after the first introductory meeting were fairly quick and uncomplicated. Appendix B contains the information and consent sheet that I circulated. There were two ethical issues of particular note that arose in the research, and both feature as a shift from matters of protocols and codes to matters of how to behave in the field and the development of personal relationships with research participants. The first concerns the lack of ability to control or adequately define what would emerge from ethnographic research; the second refers to the use in my publicly available research outputs of talk about silence which included participants' personal discussion and evaluation of others in the group.

4.12.1 The ethics of not knowing in advance the research parameters

During the initial discussions about my research to negotiate access, one of the council employees emailed me to say that her line manager was fine with her participating in my research as long as my writing passed through their communications team (though it was not clear what the team would do with my writing). I had some concerns that such a move, passing my writing to others in her organisation, would give her and the others in the group less protection rather than more. We agreed instead a compromise: that I would check how I was writing about the project with the participants themselves, to make sure I was fictionalising and anonymising details sufficiently well. However this was a cause of some concern for me, inasmuch as I did not know what I could commit to in advance, and what this compromise and checking with participants would actually mean in practice.

An issue with ethnographic research and ethics is that ethnography is provisional, contingent and emergent (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). The problem I encountered was to do with the prior unknowability of what I would find in my research on silence. There may have been a possible mismatch between participants' expectations and my own practice. One early response to this was to retain access to another project group for a while initially, in order to establish the sense of whether this group would be a suitable place for fieldwork to progress well. As it turned out, nothing significantly problematic happened, and my early fears subsided as I got to know the project group members better.

4.12.2 The ethics of telling or not telling other people's stories

The second ethical issue concerns the appropriate use in my research outputs of data relating what participants said about each other, and the impact this potentially may have on their continuing working relationships with each other. I had told participants that I would talk to them in confidence and would anonymise data. However, this meant at times a compromised position in relation to others in the group during the data generation process, as I asked them questions but didn't engage in turn in answering their questions, or at least their *inferred* questions. I could either be seen as telling tales if I did engage, or as refusing to offer information that they knew I would know (withholding!). In this sense, ethics and reflexivity merged, as I had to consider what I could share and how I was positioning myself over the months.

Cunliffe and Karunanayake (2013), drawing on Michelle Fine's work, discuss the hyphen-spaces between the researcher and research participants, and the ongoing shifts of identity that take place in fieldwork. This issue was keenly felt by me and

affected the data gathered in two ways: by me noticing my own silences that were then recorded in fieldnotes, and by my choice of response that impacted upon the way in which the conversation subsequently developed. For instance, in the exit interview with Paul, one of the County Council officers, he had referred to what had been perceived by many to be a difficult moment in one of the meetings, which had involved Sean, the university team lead. Paul said to me in the exit interview:

'I don't know if he [Sean] thinks he shouldn't have said it but .. he perhaps felt he had to say it.'

Paul would have known that I had already discussed with Sean his thoughts about the meeting, since I had had discussions by then with all the other project group members. In this conversation with Paul, I felt that his words were encouraging me to contribute what I knew about whether Sean thought he should not have said it. I made a conscious decision to ignore the encouragement. My deflecting response that followed his utterance was, in hindsight, ill-crafted:

'I think what's interesting about that is that er .. there was that big, well what I would call it, an argument in the meeting but then actually it all kind of blew over and it was all alright again, and I was really interested in that'.

It includes a value judgment on my part that dismisses the severity of Sean's behaviour, and that then leads to Paul agreeing that the group had been able to withstand such discomfort over the long run. If he had wanted to suggest that the situation did not become all alright again, my deflection sets up a conversational difficulty for him.

The intersubjectivity of the research calls into question what is ethical or not to speak about: rules of ethics based on protocol are rarely straightforward to apply. My social role as researcher brought into play difficult issues of gossip (Foster, 2004; Linell, 2009, p.99), particularly because of the way in which I had constructed the research design, with the meetings being recorded and the post-meeting conversations being less formal and more off-record. The identity of being a gossipier may be an interesting one to explore in relation to this research topic, although within the confines of this thesis, I can do no more than note its importance and move on.

5 INTRODUCING THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH SETTING

This chapter sets out the basic description of the research setting, the constitution of the project group and the aim of the project they were delivering. It introduces the characters in the ethnographic story as they introduced themselves and the project to me at the beginning of my research. The chapter's purpose is to set the scene prior to the subsequent presentation of the empirical data that focuses on silence and voice in Chapters 6 to 9. While it has something of a realist feel (Van Maanen, 1988), it aims to provide some contextual orientation, and some of the non-contested components, before the subsequent, more contested versions of what was going on are introduced in the four data chapters that follow.

5.1 Description of the project(s) - Urban Park / Quay to the Manor

The project's origins lay in a City Council aim to regenerate a greenspace site that was in its ownership. The greenspace site in question was located between the city centre and the quayside, and next to a historically important building, the Manor House, owned by a politically influential landowner. The official City Council view was that the area should be of better quality and more high-profile to help attract visitors into the area and inwards to both the Manor House and the city centre as recreational and commercial destinations. Thus, the desire was to create better economic, social and environmental benefits from its use.

The City Council had called upon the County Council's area team for some support given the City's extreme lack of staff and programme resources due to recent budget cuts. The County Council had a remit to work with district authorities on projects to improve and regenerate under-used land as well as to foster community engagement. To scope out an initial feasibility project, meetings took place between County and

City officials. The landscape designer, Martin, who had previously worked with both County and City teams, was called upon to give his ecological and landscape advice. Martin was later to join the university's research team.

At a similar time to these initial discussions between County and City Councils, the local university had been successful in securing funding for a large-scale project, entitled Co-De, to research the use of collaborative inquiry (co-inquiry) techniques in public consultation exercises. As part of the search for case studies to deliver this research objective, the university team consulted the City Council for possible projects. The timing seemed propitious, with partnership work on the greenspace site appearing to suit both sides. For the councils, the university provided a much-needed and currently absent resource to run the public consultation programme desired as a prerequisite to develop the site. For the university, these council requirements provided a space in which to test co-inquiry techniques for their research case study.

From these conversations a project management framework was put together by the County Council, which was eventually signed off in early summer in the year of my fieldwork, with an identified project team and a formal Project Board to oversee what was called the Urban Park feasibility project. The project documents define the contribution to be delivered by the university team in terms of revenue, project team involvement and outputs of stakeholder engagement. The documents set out an anticipation that work would continue into an implementation phase once the feasibility reports had been received and reviewed.

At the same time as this project documentation was being drafted, the university team were recruiting the staff who would help deliver their funded research project.

This case study was branded by the university team as the *Quay to the Manor House* (QtM) project, and was subject to reporting requirements set by the research funding body which were additional and separate to those of the Project Board to which the County Council officers were reporting. A complicating factor that had arisen just before my involvement was the university's unanticipated scaling-back of the resources they could offer, due to certain changes in their project funding calculations. Some of the original community engagement that had been agreed thus had had to be renegotiated, and this had certain consequences as the project unfolded, as detailed in the data chapters that follow (see, for instance, Chapter 8's discussion of work that the County Council took on as replacement for this lost resource).

Another complicating factor arose around the same time as the Urban Park/QtM projects were being set up. The future of the Manor House unexpectedly became uncertain, with the owners initiating their own consultation about how its use might be transformed in future. While the greenspace by itself had little public profile, the Manor House was well-known and newsworthy. What happened in its nearby surroundings became of interest both to the Manor House owners as well as to the general public. This meant that the Urban Park/QtM work became much more politically high-profile than was originally envisaged.

My initial involvement with the project group occurred three months after the early discussions and the formation of the group had taken place. The next chapter continues the discussion of the origins of the project and elaborates the project group participants' different versions of this time, the difficulties and uncertainties that had been faced, and the struggle in creating some agreement about how to proceed. For the moment, I return in this chapter to introduce the project group participants.

5.2 Description of the project group participants

The term used to signify the project group seemed to be contentious by the time I joined the project, with confusion arising a number of times in meetings when the 'project group' was mentioned. In the County Council official project documentation, this group is described as 'the project team'. However, this name was sometimes confused with the university's project team, which had been put together to deliver the university's funded research work. In the individual interviews, I eventually settled into using the phrase the 'wider project group' to refer specifically to the aggregate of university and council participants who were involved in developing the two slightly different strands of work, and who attended the meetings that I was video-recording. For the purposes of this thesis, I use the term *project group* to indicate the stable membership of representatives who attended the meetings, who had some organisational responsibilities for the two overlapping pieces of work, and to whom I was regularly talking for my research.

The project group comprised six people, representing three different organisations: the City Council, County Council, and university team. I introduce them below in that order of organisational representation.

Alison represented the City Council. During our first interview together, Alison labelled her career background as 'complicated' with lots of career moves, both departmentally and geographically. Despite this, she had been working at the City Council for a number of years and described herself as a 'qualified project manager on green and community projects, but without the technical side'. She compared herself in this respect to Nina at the County Council with whom she had worked on a number of these projects, stating that Nina was 'more about ecology'. It should be

noted that, although technically the Urban Park project emerged from the City Council's agenda, it was the County Council who had taken on the project administration due to, according to Alison, a lack of staff capacity in the City Council. Alison often noted the pressure she was under to deliver other work. The County Council representatives in the project group also often commented how Alison was having to cover the work left by staff redundancies and unfilled vacancies in her team. Subsequently her attendance at the meetings was frequently in doubt, due to the requirements of other work, right up until the moment she actually appeared.

From the County Council side, Nina and Paul were the joint project managers for the Urban Park feasibility project. At our first interview meeting, **Paul** described his background as having worked in planning policy and development control at a number of local authorities over the years. He had just recently moved into a new role at the County Council, into the same team as Nina, after working in the organisation in a number of temporary project posts, one of which had now just finished. He suggested that their joint role as project managers might appear confusing to people outside the team, but they were working out between them how they would divide up the duties. At the moment, he said he was doing more of the management of the site survey work, and Nina was doing more of the community engagement side.

Nina held a senior officer role in the County Council area team and specialised in community engagement, green space and regeneration. She referred to Paul as having 'a more structured approach to project management' with herself being more focused on the community engagement. She had already accumulated a good amount of knowledge about local groups and previous initiatives in the city, due to

previous joint work with the City Council and in particular on a number of the same projects with Alison, over the last few years.

For the university side, **Sean** was a senior lecturer specialising in collaborative inquiry, and was the university's principal investigator for the funded co-inquiry research project. This was the first time he was leading such a large research project and the first time managing dedicated research project staff, with a number of creative designers as well as a full-time project manager employed on fixed-term contracts. His role in the project, he said, was to set the overall direction rather than being intricately involved in the minutiae of the co-inquiry delivery.

Kerry was the full-time project manager of the university research project who was coordinating the work of the other 'creatives', with Sean as her immediate line manager. She was the only member of the university team staff who was working solely on this project. She had been recruited from a local strategic partnership and had previous experience working in public sector settings. This was her first time working in an academic setting.

Martin was a freelance landscape designer who had worked in the area for a number of years. He explained he had been employed previously by both City and County Councils on local projects, therefore had worked on many of the same projects as Alison and Nina, and still had a close working relationship with them. He had been appointed as one of the temporary 'creative' staff for the university's co-inquiry project, and described himself as a 'bridge' between the two sides. While his official remit in the group was via the *QtM* project involvement, his ongoing participation in the Council's longer-term work on the site was envisaged by Nina at the time of my joining the project.

5.3 The project group meetings and communications

The format of face to face meetings apparently had not been a mode of group communication right from the start of the project, but rather had been devised as a response to difficulties incurred via other modes of communication (primarily email) and more ad hoc timetabling of meetings.⁴⁵ The group aimed for the meetings to be roughly fortnightly, although during the period of my research this fortnightly schedule was fitted around the delivery of the community engagement events, and so each meeting ended up falling in a different month. The timing of the meetings was worked out to fit around team members' other work, which tended to be regarded as less flexible. Therefore the meetings usually took place very early, starting at 9am, or at the end of the working day, starting around 4.30-5pm. A good proportion of time was devoted within the meetings to comparing diaries and debating the best date and time for the next meeting, in order that all team members could attend.

The location for the meetings shifted each time between Martin's private office in town, the council offices a little further away, and the university team's premises further out again, on the town's outskirts. The occupant of each location was in charge of the logistics for the meeting that took place there: the booking of and entry into the room, the refreshments, etc.

Kerry, as the university team project manager, was at the centre of the communications for the project. She sent out regular weekly email updates to the group and was the person to whom general queries or comments were sent. While there was no officially designated meeting chair or minute-taker, the tasks usually fell to Kerry implicitly. She however described the chairing as usually being taken

⁴⁵ This becomes a matter for further discussion in the next chapter.

up either by herself or by Nina. Kerry described the drawing up of the agenda as occurring through a process of informal consultation with other group members before she emailed it out a day or so prior to the meeting taking place.

Table 2 sets out in alphabetical order the individual participants' attendance (or absence) at each of the five meetings that were held during my research, and indicates the post-meeting conversations that took place (marked by a 'yes'). Where it was not possible to set up an individual interview, mainly due to participants' annual leave or travel elsewhere, this is noted.

Table 1 - Meeting attendance and post-meeting discussions

	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alison	<i>no post-meeting availability</i>	<i>no post-meeting availability</i>	yes	<i>absent</i>	yes
Kerry	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Martin	<i>no post-meeting availability</i>	yes	yes	<i>absent</i>	<i>no longer part of project group</i>
Nina	<i>absent</i>	yes	yes	<i>absent</i>	yes
Paul	<i>no post-meeting availability</i>	yes	yes	yes	yes
Sean	<i>absent</i>	<i>no post-meeting availability</i>	yes	<i>absent</i>	yes

5.4 An introduction to the four data-focused chapters

In the following data chapters, the accounts of silence are situated and given meaning in a particular local context in which a heteroglossic split between the social language associated with the council and with the university practice continually re-emerged in the project group's interactions. Certain words and

phrases, objects, ideas, events and relationships are allocated different 'evaluative accents' (Maybin, 2001, p.65) by different members of the group within these two languages. However, these languages over time also become learnt and absorbed by participants: in particular, Alison and Kerry orient to, and use the language of, academic co-inquiry. For others like Nina, this language-learning is more difficult. It is in this heteroglossic setting - ostensibly a collaborative endeavour shared by all the participants, but privately described as something rather different - that the accounts of silence are embedded.

The 'agenda items' that are introduced in the next four chapters, as topics that are discussed, contested, and differently evaluated by members of the group, concern the following:

1. setting up the initial project structures and processes: how the project was formed, and how this formation influences what people subsequently can and do talk about;
2. a workshop which the university is organising and from which the council officers are barred from attending;
3. a community talk organised by the County Council, the advertising for which creates a particularly heated argument in one of the project meetings;
4. the transfer of work from this first consultation stage to the longer-term stages of implementation by the councils.

I now turn to the first of these agenda items, in Chapter 6.

6 THE EARLY DAYS OF THE PROJECT AND 'THE STOCKHOLM INCIDENT'

This first data chapter reviews how project group members talked about the project's early days and the difficulties faced at the beginning of the work together.

Participants used the way in which they encountered and interpreted each other in these early days, and the particular patterns in the relationships that became established, as a consequent resource to explicate their silence over the subsequent months. This chapter therefore introduces the initial orientations and interpretations of each other as project group members, and highlights the shifts that occurred in the relationships between the group members in these early stages. It also introduces some of the other voices from outside the project group which become featured later in participants' descriptions of their own silence.

The data in this chapter is slightly different than in the following three chapters, since it refers to a period in the project before I started my research, when I was not present. The positioning work emphasised is therefore between the project group members as *characters* portrayed in each others' stories. The data is drawn mostly from two sources. Firstly, it comes from the introductory interviews I conducted with participants as they talked to me about their work backgrounds, distinctions between themselves and others in the group, and their understanding of what they were doing in this project. Secondly, it comes from the exit interviews after the project had ended, as participants were reflecting upon the processes and outcomes of the project work.

What the chapter shows is how the pattern of interaction that emerged in the early days of the project, and the different interpretations of how the project should be

delivered, translated into a generalised form of silence for the council officers, due to the gradual development of certain understandings about how the collaboration was to take place and what should not be raised for discussion. What was taken off the agenda was discussion that involved any notion of constraints or control over the university team's research, with the council officers becoming excluded from participation in certain arenas of project planning and delivery.

6.1 Early struggles to understand the two sides of the work

While my questions about how the project started were often met with some uncertainty and a lack of detail about chronology and sequence - where the original idea had come from, who had met whom, in what order the meetings had happened between County Council, City Council and university representatives - there was one feature about the project's beginning that was raised by all the project participants, often with much detail provided. In the first interviews with participants when I joined the project, many made a distinction between a *Then* of the past and a *Now* of the present. The early stages of the project were characterised as difficult; now, as I was talking to them, they had got through this difficult time and it was easier to work together.

The difficult formative stage of the project became illustrated primarily through reference to arguments between Nina, one of the County Council project managers, and Sean, the university project team lead, as they tried to negotiate how to organise the work. There were many references to a 'personality clash' between the two of them, by both Sean and Nina as well as by other project group members. A central moment of crisis in participants' stories was connected to a trip to a research conference in Stockholm, to which Sean had invited Nina after a few weeks of

working together. Sean, Kerry and Nina had all travelled to the conference. What happened there and its aftermath - what one of the participants dubbed 'the Stockholm incident' - was used by participants to demonstrate the different initial expectations about the ways in which they would collaborate on the project, and how the relationship between the university staff and the council officers had subsequently evolved.

I start by offering Kerry's version of the 'Stockholm incident', which she narrated during her exit interview, because it has the advantage of containing a lot of detail and is transcribed from the audio-recording in her own words. This version of the story was offered to me after the project had already ended, by a member of the university team: it clearly describes the 'them' and 'us' aspects of the group, with Kerry and Sean positioned on one side, and Nina positioned on the other. Kerry's story notes that there was a point when the university team thought that perhaps they could not continue working on this project as a means to deliver their own research aim, and that they might have walked away from the collaboration at that point:

Kerry: because it nearly nearly *ended* at one point, in Stockholm

Clare: So what *why*, just because you thought it's not worth the hassle?

K: Oh god, we were .. in the middle of a meeting in Stockholm which was so intense I can't even tell you, it's like breakfast meetings networking dinners presentations lunch bed at night, the strategic workshop was in about three weeks time and Nina was very anxious that we hadn't bottomed out what it was, actually we had, we just hadn't sent it her .. and that um that it was going to flop and we didn't have the right people and she didn't know what was coming out of it, she was *terrified* of it .. to us it was like, it's a workshop, it's fine, you know ... and then we had this .. meeting in a .. lunch meeting with her, took ourselves away

C: Yeah

- K: and every time we had a break in a meeting she was coming up going Kerry we need to talk about this, and I was like oh my god I'm with my .. it was really difficult, and so we had this lunch meeting and bottomed it out with her and then there was some shirty emails, not between me
- C: I think you talked about that
- K: Yeah and there was that and er .. there was a bit of a falling out .. and I remember Sean saying she's not going to give up control, we can't do this, this isn't the project for us, and his instincts, which are often quite *right*, were this isn't going to happen .. because if she's, won't even let us .. she.. run this one workshop which is quite straightforward and insists on this level of control and micro-management ... we're just fighting our way through it, but erm we yeah turned it around, yeah nearly didn't happen ..

The environment in which this incident took place was an academic research conference, with Kerry describing the intensity of presentations and the procession of breakfasts, lunches, dinners at which they were meeting people and networking. Nina's local authority anxieties are portrayed as getting in the way of their research agenda. The workshop mentioned in the story would effectively launch the public face of the co-inquiry project with the councils. The university team had actually 'bottomed out' the workshop on their own; the problem was simply that Nina had no knowledge of the details, since Sean and Kerry had worked without her involvement. In Kerry's account, the workshop is characterised as relatively straightforward and unproblematic to the university team. Nina's focus on it is characterised as inappropriate and constraining on Kerry and Sean's activities while they are trying to concentrate on engagement with other co-inquiry researchers and practitioners.

In her story, the lunch meeting to work out the difficulties was then followed by some 'shirty emails'. This subject was mentioned to me a number of times through the project by Kerry and others. At the beginning of my research, Kerry had told me

that Nina and Sean had ended up emailing each other while they were all still in Stockholm. The email exchange had been triggered by an initial emailed suggestion from Nina to cancel the workshop, since there did not yet seem to be proper plans for it. Sean's response was furious. The email conversation that ensued, with others in the project group copied in, ended up being typed in capital letters. The inclusion of this typographical detail suggested some of the angry tone of the conversation.

Kerry in the exit interview then talked about the process of 'turning it around':

- C: And what was the thing that ... stopped it from falling apart then, was that just you all going to lunch and talking it through and understanding her concerns a bit more or was there something else
- K: We had a chat in the airport .. and there was like, what's really bothering you, and it was that conversation about you just want to use this as a test bed, and I said, but what what do you *want*, what would make you happy at the end of this, where do you want to be
- C: Yeah
- K: like solutions-focused sort of question, she just said .. I just want it to go a step in the right direction, she was just really worried, I don't know what she thought we were going to do [...]. she was scared of something, bad press, negative publicity reaction ...
- C: Yeah OK
- K: us representing them wrongly, I don't know, I never quite got to the bottom of her her fear, I don't know if it was about letting go of control or about what people might want from the park .. but she .. that's all she wants, a step in the right direction

The crisis was solved in this account by Sean and Kerry spending time discussing Nina's concerns with her. Kerry talks of Nina here as someone who she could not quite understand, whose concerns she 'never quite got to the bottom of'. In the extracts above, Nina is described as 'anxious', 'terrified', 'worried', 'scared' - emotions which, Kerry suggests, derived from Nina's feeling of uncertainty and lack of control

at this early stage of the project. Nina was then described as having a fundamentally different ideological orientation to the project than Sean:

K: and I think I remember her saying to Sean ... when we had a bit of a melt-down in Stockholm, you just see this project as a test bed for knowledge exchange .. and she wanted it to be about the people and the project

The distinction between Sean and Nina, in summary, is characterised as one of wanting different outcomes, responding to different agendas. Nina is portrayed as not quite trusting of the university team's 'test bed' motives.

In his exit interview, Sean identified the Stockholm trip as one of the key moments in the project when some significant change happened among the group members. It was from this point that Nina became positioned by him and Kerry as someone who was going to be difficult to manage in relation to their research project:

S: the idea was that she [Nina] would meet with lots of council people so people like her, you know, working on the coal face but also policy makers who are all working in co-inquiry and thinking um.. struggling

C: Heh

S: and .. well um not *struggling* well I say *wrestling* with

C: Yeah

S: the council world and co-inquiry world and how they fit together and they were all making ..er having a positive experience and we thought and hoped that would help Nina .. get to grips with it and I think the reverse happened ... she was um, Kerry described it as being like going on holiday with someone and then breaking up with them while you're away

C: Hmmm hmm hmmm ((laughing))

S: and I realised that I was never going to get ..

C: It was never going to happen

S: she was never going to get it, so that was a key point because it made, it changed so .. I think we both put a lot of effort into um.. getting *on* and making the project *work* but I realised she was never going to really be a co-inquirer, wasn't in her nature to accept the loss of power that the co-inquiry process means ...

In these exit interview stories from Kerry and Sean, the reason for taking Nina to Stockholm was offered to me as one of introducing her to the co-inquiry world, which included people like herself. The metaphor of breaking up with someone while on holiday suggests that it was not a foregone conclusion that the relationship with Nina was going to be difficult when they invited her to the conference: the collaboration could have turned out differently. However, Nina is framed during this event as not being able to 'get it' or to 'accept a loss of power'. The difficulty that Sean portrays is identified as Nina's response to the Stockholm conference which, rather than learning from others and seeing what they were doing, as Sean was wanting her to do, was to concentrate on the details of the workshop. Nevertheless, the positioning between the three characters that Sean uses is rather ambiguous, and seems not to be one of joint collaboration but rather one of demonstration and explanation, as Nina waits for the detail of the workshop that is still not forthcoming.

In my initial conversation with Sean, when I first joined the project and when the co-inquiry events were still being planned and organised by his team, he noted that he still did not know what would come out of these co-inquiry events with the public and that he was living with some uncertainty about the outcomes. He made a clear distinction between the concepts of consultation and co-inquiry: the former, consultation, was about information provision, could be more controlled, and was associated with council practice; the latter, co-inquiry, was creative, required a loss of control and a lack of preconceived notions about what the results would be (and

therefore was more stressful, he suggested) and was associated with his area of academic research. He associated Nina's anxious state with the newly high-profile status of the greenspace site which had arisen after the choice had already been made to use the site as a research case study (see Chapter 5). Thus her anxiety was implicitly equated with her membership of the council sub-grouping and the political stakes of having to be accountable for the project's outcomes.

However, while he might acknowledge her anxiety, he was still left with the issue of how to carry out his research objectives. Her participation was creating difficulties in the development of the co-inquiry work. In the exit interview, Sean provided an illustration of the problem in relation to what had happened at the university team's early planning events:

'er Nina gatecrashed one afternoon and she was talking about the strategic documents and you know, you shouldn't be thinking in *this* way, you should be thinking *that* way and .. erm .. which is exactly what you *don't* want. Even if that is true, you want people .. the group to form and for them to explore and find their own way, so she was constantly cutting *down* possibilities and erm .. so she could say something like there is *no way* to explore beneath the surface of the ground and .. erm what she meant was there is no way we can *dig* .. which is very *very* different to explore, particularly to designers .. well actually there are a *million* ways you can explore, you can get people to lie on their back and think think down .. or you could have erm er take take pictures and then show .. what was .. there, you know, she couldn't see the ways you could explore or or go beyond those limitations, she was kind of .. yeah.. convergent'

His frustration with Nina is implicitly bound up with the way she is talking, her 'cutting down' of possibilities, her lack of ability to see other meanings in words, and her impact upon the discussion emerging between the newly-appointed university research project team members. Sean suggests that she is 'convergent' at a time when divergence and openness in thinking was needed. Thus, for him, keeping Nina

silent, away from the research work, became important for his research project's success.

Nina contributed a similar version of difficulties at the beginning of the project, but with slightly different relationships and implications drawn from it. In our introductory interview, she noted that the outputs from this first stage would be the end product for the university, but for the councils this would be just the beginning of the work. Her perspective was much longer-term. For this reason, she said, she and Paul were developing a 'Friends of the site'-type group to keep the work going through and after this first stage. She emphasised that the two councils had originally wanted this stage to produce a master plan for the greenspace site. However, they had reached an agreement that they were going to get a report rather than a spatial plan from the university, and the work had become easier now that they had defined some key messages for the project between the councils and university members. She noted:

'I have to be very careful about my words, Sean is an academic and is keen on words. But I don't think he understands partnerships, he digs his heels in immediately and doesn't try to find a way.'

Sean's lack of understanding of the social language of partnerships is positioned as a difficulty. His affiliation with academia and being 'keen on words' is contrasted with her own understanding of partnership work and finding a way to work together.

In her exit interview, she elaborated more on the anxiety and difficulties she had felt at the beginning of the project, both about using a co-inquiry approach when she, as a council project officer, needed to be able to account for what they were doing, but also about how the various members of each of the two sub-groupings did not understand each other's work:

N: I think we had a number of discussions where we just didn't quite understand, I think Sean once said I just don't understand what you're talking about, he said it more than once ha ha which was fine but, you know, we came from different er, we were trying to understand what we were doing, and it's taken us quite a while [...] there was quite a lot of confusion initially about what it was that we were doing and what it would achieve .. and .. a big effort made certainly on our part to have a shared understanding and er .. whatever that was, I mean we were clear it would be a contribution, we were clear it was er *developmental*, but we needed to be able as project managers to set it down and to communicate it to the Board what was expected at the end of the process but because of it being so .. evolving, that was quite difficult ... so yeah .. that discussion *wasn't* there at the beginning, it was like finding, coming to that, as a process, a journey, yeah

While her utterance was not fully completed ('we came from different er'), I interpreted Nina as meaning that they came from different backgrounds. While she suggests that the council staff had been making an effort to understand - 'a big effort made certainly on our part to have a shared understanding' - the university team are depicted as less obliging and hence the discussion 'wasn't there'. There seemed to be a clash of expectations about how conceptually the two different - university and council - sides of the project group would be involved in the work, and she constructs the university team as having no appreciation for the difficulties of not being able to report back to the Project Board something that was concrete rather than 'developmental' and 'evolving'. The heteroglossic clash between university and council practices and ways of working are used by both Sean and Kerry, and by Nina, to show the difficulty of working with the other sub-group. However, both Sean and Nina raised additional issues about each other as unique personalities - Nina as 'convergent', Sean as 'digging his heels in' - that was making this project more difficult.

6.2 A second story, of council officer collusion and strategic silence

Both Kerry and Sean stressed that it was not a foregone conclusion that the university team would continue to work on the project with the councils at that point of crisis - Sean's emails had indicated to the council officers that they might walk away from the collaboration. Both Sean and Kerry's accounts emphasise how hard they worked in order to overcome the negative impact on their research of Nina's interference and her apparent wish to micro-manage. Alison, the City Council representative, nevertheless identified a different moment of resolution in which it is her own intervention, rather than Kerry and Sean's conversation with Nina in the airport, that is key. This version of her story is taken from the exit interview transcript:

- A: You can't step back, can you ... this project's very important to us, it's a big project, there's obviously some conflict .. and I was really I was kind of .. almost like a silent partner because County were project managers and university were leading on the co-inquiry
- C: Oh yeah
- A: that was when I had to step forward and have a bit more of a voice because ultimately it was the City Council and the emails started flying ha ha ((both laugh)) that was a big change unfortunately yeah ... that was the big turning point ... Yeah unfortunately, I didn't have that role initially, that role started after the Stockholm incident as we shall call it [...] [At the beginning] I had to keep telling myself I'm not project manager, I'm not project manager, and I had to keep my mouth shut [...] so when the role changed, it actually kind of made my life quite easy.'

Here she offers a first description of her own silence practice, when she is restraining herself from interfering in Nina's work. The move from telling herself 'I'm not project manager, I'm not project manager' to an active intervention comes at the point when she is required to act to protect the City Council's project from failing.

There was a threat from Sean that the project could collapse, and at that point she had to respond, moving from silence to voice, from non-participation to intervention.

When we were talking in the exit interview at the end point of the project, she identified what she saw as the precise problem:

A: The conflict was what *Nina* wanted and what *Sean* wanted and I'm not knocking because .. Nina .. I .. certainly at the beginning I completely understood where she was coming from because it was traditional how we .. outcomes that we need, results that we need to feed back..

C: Yeah

A: and Sean was basically saying .. he was developing it with his *team* so as we went through the process and in the end he was like, look you're going to have to let us run with it

In Alison's account, she constructs Sean as focusing on 'his team', the university research team, while Nina is focusing on the traditional outcomes of local authority project management. It is at this point that the council sub-grouping becomes a rather more complex grouping than simply a generic local authority one. In my first interview with Alison at the beginning of my research, she had talked of her intervention, even though it was Nina who was supposed to be taking the project management lead on behalf of both City and County Councils:

'[Nina] has set ways of doing things and is very structured. I'm not sure how much you've heard already about what happened in Stockholm, but there were all these emails flying around, and I had to be clear in my emails what the situation was. Basically I had to cut into Nina's work, since I was the City employee and I had to protect the City Council's interests. My instructions were to maintain positive relations with the university. The [City] Council wanted to develop these relationships and unfortunately Nina's situation may affect that relationship.'

The importance of the project for the City Council, the voluntary and fragile nature of the partnership with the university, and the City Council's desire to maintain positive relations with the university are used by Alison to show why she 'cut into' Nina's work: she needed to do something to keep the university involved. Different objectives for this project start to emerge in people's talk: there is not only Sean's research objective but also Alison's objective on behalf of her City Council line managers to maintain the relationship with the university, as well as the long-term objective of the actual enhancement of the site.

Alison's exit interview account provided more justification for the suggestion she had made at that point to her County Council colleagues, that they simply stand back and see what happens:

A: There was a danger of that [the project not happening] .. we needed a reassurance from the university of what the outcomes would be .. even though they couldn't tell us ... when I say *we* .. generally it was *me* because I have to take that back to the City Council so I had to .. understand a bit more about what co-inquiry was and what we could expect from the outcomes. Nobody knew what we were going to get, we didn't know if it was going to be .. around access, we didn't know if it was going to be around nature or .. we didn't know the actual things

C: Yeah

A: but we knew that people would have their opinion and there would be something solid and if it all went wrong .. because I had this conversation with Paul and Nina .. if it all went, we've got to trust them, we didn't, we said, we didn't know what the outcome would be .. it *could* all go wrong .. but we're not losing anything apart from time ... and we had to *have* that conversation and I can't underestimate [sic] how difficult it was at times this was for us ha ha ha ha

C: Yeah .. as a group you mean, you as a council group

A: as council yeah

C: Yeah

A: because it's very different from what we normally do

C: Yeah I bet

A: very different

The concept of co-inquiry is positioned by Alison as difficult and different for the local authorities; yet a worse outcome, she suggests, would have been for the project to fall apart. In her conversation with Paul and Nina, she had suggested an approach of non-intervention, that they trust the university even though the project might go wrong. She suggests in this account that really the only risk was a loss of time since they 'knew that people would have their opinion and there would be something solid': some kind of positive benefit would be derived even though they could not define it in advance, as local authority procedures normally would. Based on this proposal by Alison to her colleagues, the County Council officers apparently stepped back from being involved in the university team's planning of the events to be delivered with the general public, thus no longer having any input into the process that would be classed as part of their public consultation exercise.

Paul, the second County Council officer and Nina's colleague, added to this perspective on the early days during my first interview with him. He talked about how they, the three council officers, had all resigned themselves to this state of having no control over the organising of this stage of the project, and how they were waiting for the university's work to be completed before their own processes were resumed:

'There was lots of tension about boundaries at first, but it's clearer now. Because of the co-inquiry element, the university hadn't wanted us to restrict their process. But once the university project team have finished, we take [the project] back. The university are bringing in resources that we didn't have, so we just have to sit back and wait for the report really. Before, we

were trying to pin the university down and they didn't want to be pinned down. Now we've just accepted it.'

He provides here a rationale for the temporary disengagement from the substantive detail of project work. The university were bringing in resources that otherwise the councils would not have had; therefore the council officers could not dictate what happened. However, this was to be *only* a temporary condition of disengagement until the report from the university team was received.

6.3 Learning each other's language

It was around the time of the Stockholm incident that Sean suggested setting up the fortnightly meeting schedule to which my research became attached. As I joined the project, the difficult initial stage had already been negotiated. During my first in-depth interview with Sean, when I asked him about the purpose of the meetings, he said:

'I think the meetings are useful in that we're learning the language of each other, how each other speaks, it's like a language school, it's been good to get to know each other and have that face to face contact.'

The idea of two different social languages, associated with two different professional worlds - of local authority work, project management and consultation, and of university research work, openness, and co-inquiry - is reinforced here. The gradual understanding of each other's language, and thus an understanding of each other, is suggested by Sean to be taking place through their regular face to face interaction. He suggests that he is learning as much as the council officers are.

An example of such learning comes from Paul's first interview, in which he suggested that certain topics had become censored due to the way the project was

being delivered. He mentioned that he had been one of a number of speakers at the official launch of the project, and how Sean had publicly corrected something that Paul had said on the podium. Paul had said there were 'constraints' on the site ('because', he emphasised to me in the interview, 'there are!') and Sean had immediately come back to say there were no constraints on *thinking*. Paul suggested to me:

'Any language like that [constraints] leads to conflict. We're going into the meetings now with a different mindset. I think very carefully about what's said. There are phrases and words that I wouldn't use now: coordinate, control, scrutinise.'

It is the university's language of co-inquiry here that has authoritative force - the language of giving up control and seeing what happens - and that undermines the discussion of traditional council consultation, project management and reporting processes. Issues of council involvement in, or control over, the university's work are understood as no longer to be on the agenda for the project group members.

Then Paul noted:

'Alison's very good at it, she's learnt what not to say.'

Similarly, in the first interview I had with Nina, she said:

'I need to be careful with what I say, the university side has very different points of view from me. I have different meetings with Alison.'

The centripetal forces in the university's language have created a situation in which it is difficult for Nina and Paul to talk about the topics that they might want to raise with the university research team. There is one social language that can be used with Alison as a fellow council colleague, and another that is associated with Sean and

that requires more care and concentration. While Alison has learnt to respond to this other language in a way that is acceptable to Sean, and in particular has learnt what topics are taboo within it, Paul and Nina are still struggling to learn but also to deal with the consequences of this discourse. It is not Alison's work that is being impacted directly but Paul and Nina's, as they work out how to navigate the local authority project monitoring and reporting at this stage.

The co-inquiry language learning was also being undertaken by Kerry, and she noted furthermore the relationship between becoming more fluent in the language of co-inquiry and better appreciating the actions of her line manager, Sean. In her exit interview, she mentioned an event that had taken place in the early days, when Sean had demanded that Nina leave one of the university's planning meetings:

K: I think .. sometimes Sean would be quite adamant about things and looking back, as I say, now that I've seen the theory of what he was trying to do, which was to create an open space here for co-inquiry where the council couldn't interfere... I didn't quite understand why they couldn't work with us more ... I didn't quite understand why *we* had to own it, so sometimes I felt a bit uncomfortable and my nature was like yeah come, because I think Nina came to a design team meeting and Sean pretty much threw her out

C: Oh really aaw

K: at the end of the day, yep sorry you can't be here

C: Right

K: and I was like ooh, you know, but I didn't understand why

Sean's actions are constructed as going against what would have been in Kerry's nature to do. She positions the two of them as different from each other. It is his adamance and exclusion of the council officers in particular that is positioned as problematic. However, from her perspective at the end of the project, she now

understands the theory behind his actions, and can evaluate his actions as appropriate, even though she did not do so before. She elaborated further for me:

- C: What what I don't think I understand why, what what would have *changed* if she [Nina] was there then
- K: I think she would have influenced it .. or told them the concerns
- C: What needed to be done
- K: what *couldn't* be done and if you look at open innovation, it's it's all aspiration and possibility and opportunity, it's *not* ..
- C: You can't do that
- K: you can't do that because then you start looking at problems it's about yeah um so yeah I can see *completely* why

The expert language of co-inquiry, which Sean is associated with, now permeates Kerry's discourse and her sense of discomfort about his previous actions is no longer relevant. His motives are now interpreted through the values, objectives and activities associated with this other language.

Kerry also pointed out that the well-established relationship between Nina and Martin enabled Martin to raise issues that Sean could not:

'One of the other things that settled the council was employing Martin and we invited Martin to be that link at the partner meetings because what might have come out of *Sean's* mouth as an update, when spoken from *Martin's* mouth the council was happy with it, so Martin was a *strategic* move.'

As noted in Chapter 5, Martin had worked on a number of previous council projects with Nina and Alison, and was someone who Nina had been suggesting might be involved in taking forward the next stage of project work. Kerry implies here that Nina's previous history of working with Martin is a resource that the university team can use to deliver a message that can be heard and accepted in a way that would not

be possible for Sean to achieve. Martin can raise the same topic and manage to have it heard in a different way.

The consequences that were developing from this language-learning included different emergent affiliations between the project group members, and these did not simply run along lines of organisational identity. Sean, for instance, noted:

'I have a very different relationship with Alison, Nina and Paul. Nina's the most difficult and Alison is the easiest, and Paul is somewhere in the middle. I've just been talking to Alison about possible work that we might do after this stage of the project.'

The next two sections explore in more detail how the topic of silence is positioned in relation to the emergent relationships between the project group members, with an explicit contrast made between Alison and Nina. Alison's responsiveness to absorbing and actively using the co-inquiry language, to justify the council officers' withdrawal from the project work, was leading to a productive working relationship with Sean that was spilling over into other project work. Meanwhile, the effects for Nina, and her evaluation of this withdrawal, are rather different.

6.3.1 Alison: staying silent and trusting others to deliver

The difficult conversations around the time of the Stockholm incident, triggered by emails written in capital letters, are considered to have had a positive outcome in Alison's exit interview description:

'I got to know him [Sean] a bit more .. through those emails [in which Sean threatened to terminate the project work with the councils] erm I could understand where he was coming from.'

Alison describes her suggestion of the council officers stepping back as being part of a process of starting to understand where Sean was 'coming from', and of building

the trust to deliver the project through the development of personal understandings.

In a conversation during the early part of the project, when I asked about her silence in this project, Alison suggested to me that both she and Nina did not speak up in the project meetings because:

'We're both trying to get used to this co-inquiry way of working. It's different and difficult for us. If the end results are not more than we could have got by using a questionnaire, we'll need to justify why we spent the time on this project. We have to trust the university that we won't look bad at the end of it. It's about building this relationship.'

Not speaking up is associated with a temporary state of getting used to a new way of working, and as a feature of a relationship where trust is being developed: she and Nina as council officers are staying silent because Alison is trusting Sean to deliver. She then suggested that the effort that goes into thinking about what should be said or not had happened at the beginning of the project:

'Now I know more about the project, the others' level of experience and stuff, so I don't need to explain stuff because I know what they already know.'

Alison blends her current positioning of not needing to explain with a positioning of knowing, not just about the project but also about the other participants. The inference here is that a *conscious* consideration of whether to speak up or to stay silent is related to a stage of getting to know the other person. In this example, her silence is more comfortable: she does not need to explain stuff, she can now trust the other participants. As Knoll and Van Dick (2013) note, the evaluation of silence as good and comfortable is associated with situations where there is no need to speak up. On the other hand, a more uncomfortable situation of silence occurs, in Section 6.2, when she was having to 'keep her mouth shut' and remind herself that she was not project manager, when she felt that something needed to be said.

The story below is offered in the exit interview after the project has finished and nothing significantly wrong has occurred. Alison is now contrasting Nina's desire to learn and to be part of the process with Alison's own view on the feasibility of doing this:

A: certainly Nina I thought wanted to be very much part of the process and learn from the process um and it became apparent that that was quite *difficult* because of timescales and because of our background was and so we were on the outside and that's where the trust came, and I think Nina in particular .. yes I would like to learn from it but ... she wanted to be there as part of the *decisions*

C: Right

A: and really it turned out that we couldn't ... erm ... because .. and I think that's *right* .. it's a very difficult one .. *we* couldn't be there and I can see *I* couldn't be there ... because I might have stifled it ...

I interpret Alison's justification of her uninvolvedness in the project, using Sean's logic of the necessary exclusion of council officers, now in this later conversation with me (by which time the two of them were already working on other new projects together) as running into some difficulty towards the end of the extract, and turning to descriptions of individual character rather than organisational affiliation. She described why she might have stifled the process, and why staying silent and uninvolved had been a better course of action:

A: I think I might have been more .. if I had been more actively involved I might have been ... I might have said things .. because I, you know, I normally *do* say things .. and been more worried about the project because I would have wanted .. same as *Nina*.. certain things

C: Oh that's interesting

A: so I actually think it was *better* .. that we weren't at planning meetings because we would have, we would have been putting our own, our experiences in and our experiences .. would lead to the same as what we already *give* and this was about *new* and innovative

- C: Yeah oh that's a really interesting way of looking at it, like so kind of almost not knowing .. and just having that trust was a better way of doing it
- A: Mm
- C: than being there and participating and ... seeing what was going on
- A: And maybe influencing it back to the way we were .. um confident .. in which case it might not have .. delivered and been as successful as it was

Staying silent is constructed as going against her natural tendency, that she 'normally' does say things. Speaking up, 'putting our own experiences in', 'influencing it back' would have led to a process where they felt confident about the work again, would have imposed Alison and Nina's professional language of project management and council constraints, but would have stifled the creativity of the final product. She can claim by the end of the project that being *uninvolved*, trusting Sean, and *not* contributing has led to a successful outcome: staying silent has been good for the project work creativity.

6.3.2 Nina: glossing over what you want to say

Nina in her exit interview, talking about her own disposition to speak up or stay silent, proposed that sometimes it is not worth speaking up when one does not get on with someone:

- N: And you know what I find, sometimes when people say something.. and you don't quite understand, and you can't be bothered to ... well, if you're so far away from, and you think you're not going to ask for the, you know, to .. no, you just throw in what you wanted to say and gloss over it, don't you
- C: Yeah
- N: I think that happens a lot [...] and the thing is, if you, if it's hard work and you're tired and and you know, it's just not going to work, you know, you connect with someone and it's worthwhile exploring, then you want to do it, but if it's hard work, then you know .. ha ha

She constructs a sense of engagement similar to Van Dyne, Ang and Botero's (2003) acquiescent voice: just throwing in what you wanted to say and glossing over it. She notes the importance of individual personalities, of not being 'so far away' from each other and of 'connecting with someone' so that it is 'worthwhile exploring' if one does not understand. Sean becomes positioned in this project as one of those people with whom it is 'hard work' and not worthwhile.

After one of the meetings, I had asked Nina if she had ever attempted to improve the relationship with Sean. She said:

'Well, when we went to Stockholm, we had a talk about our relationship. I suggested then that we spend more time together, I offered for him to come and work with us for a week, I thought we could both learn from each other. And it wasn't just me saying this. But it just became clear that Sean wasn't interested, he was just interested in doing his things. I don't think it's possible to change him, and it's not worth my time to try. Paul and I have both decided. I just try to avoid him at the events, it just all feels quite stilted.'

She makes a distinction between the attempts in the early Stockholm days to find ways to work together and the resignation she now feels three months later. Just as Sean depicts Nina as a person incapable of change, Nina depicts Sean in a similar way: she has tried to help him learn, but he has shown no interest in doing so. There is a limit to the effort she will make to try and change him or to accommodate him; it is not worth her time, now she just tries to avoid him.

Paul's voice, as her County colleague, is reported and joined with hers in this discourse, but Alison's is absent. The potential significance of this absence only emerged for me over time. After one of the last meetings of the project group, for instance, the conversation with Nina had turned again to these early days. At this

later point in the project lifecycle, she was still remarking on how vulnerable they were to being attacked, and I did not really understand what she meant.

I asked, 'What do you think is possibly going to go wrong? Because there was a lot of talk at the beginning when I started about how things might go wrong.'

She replied with reference to the past tense of my utterance, 'Well, all sorts of things, it could have been the newspapers slagging us off, it could have been politics, I don't know. There was a possibility of seeing it as the university using the city as a plaything. As project managers we just didn't know what was going to be delivered.'

Some of Nina's anxiety in the early days, which Kerry and Sean had talked about, is constructed here by Nina herself now. She links the potential for things to go wrong to how the work might have been viewed by other stakeholders, and the consequences of this uncertainty for her as project manager.

I asked, 'So if it had gone negatively, it was around the reputation of the council?'

'Yes, there was all kinds of fallout that could have happened with City Council officers and our reputation. It wasn't long ago that there was real fighting between chief executives. It could have been really bad. Some councils are really good, I am always surprised when I hear how my manager talks about some of them, but it could have been really bad for me professionally and personally if this had gone bad.'

Her talk identifies her own position in the story, as a project manager who is not only having to deal with the media and politics, but also caught in the relationships between the respective chief executives of the two local authorities, and having to account to her line manager for a possible lack of progress. While her line manager

has noted that other officers have succeeded in developing positive relationships elsewhere with other local authorities, the implication seems to be that Nina has not been so successful in developing the relationship with the City Council with which she is associated. As Alison brought in the voice of her line manager, to stress the importance of developing the relationship with the university team to justify her response to the Stockholm incident, Nina invokes the voice of her line manager too, but here the relationship of importance is with the City Council.

Nina continued, 'There was one councillor in particular who on the one hand was saying that it [the project] should be done, that things should be done differently, but on the other hand kept asking what was happening and we couldn't say. You can't just say we don't know. It's really difficult to keep people informed and on board if we don't know what's happening. If we had thousands of pounds, we could have just got on with it [the project work], but we don't, we don't have any money, so we have to find ways to do things and to make things happen, we have to find different ways of working.'

She constructs here a common-sense expectation - 'you can't just say we don't know' - that she should be able to report back to councillors, both as part of her job's functional responsibilities and for pragmatic reasons, to keep them 'on board'. Being excluded from the project planning has meant she cannot fulfil this expectation.

While Paul was new to the area, Nina had been working with this City Council with these local stakeholders and community groups for a number of years already. For her, the exclusion from the project detail is constructed as problematic for the delicate interplay between her accountability to her own line managers, to the other stakeholders involved directly in this partnership working, but also ultimately to getting the greenspace enhancement work accomplished. The personality clash with

Sean, and the disengagement from the working relationship with him, become linked therefore to all sorts of other consequences for her, that she was having to work out how to manage as she glossed over in the project group communications what she might have wanted to raise. It is a difficult relational state that she describes.

6.4 Summary of emergent themes

The main theme in this first data chapter has been the connection between initial processes of getting to know each other and subsequent patterns of social interaction and communication between project group members. Early encounters with each other were used in accounts to demonstrate the personal characteristics of other project group members, and thus the type(s) of person that they were each dealing with, the potential relationships that might be expected to develop, and the types of conversations that might be possible. While participants talked about the efforts at the beginning of the project to develop good working relationships with other project group members, including those who they were finding difficult to understand and to work with, they also described points at which ideas about the other became more stable and personal characterisations became more fixed as they got to know each other better. Both Nina and Sean described how, at such a point, they stopped trying to develop a more positive relationship with each other. Others, however, described a more positive outcome, for instance as both Kerry and Alison began to understand Sean's perspective better and started to trust him more. Project group members therefore came variously positioned as being easier or harder to work with, and as presenting more or less difficulty to raise, and discuss, certain topics with. Project group members were also positioned as having different conversational resources available to them through which issues could be successfully raised in the group:

Kerry noted how Nina would respond differently to the same words spoken by either Martin or Sean, and Paul noted how Alison had become able to talk more easily to the university team members better than he or Nina had.

The concept of silence elaborated in people's accounts in this chapter has already taken on in this chapter a number of slightly different forms. Participants talked about practices of silence that unfolded *during* the early stages of the project - for instance, as Alison talked about staying silent in a gesture of trusting others (firstly Nina, then Sean) to do the work - and about silence that emerged as an outcome *from* these early stages. In this latter sense, the discursive construction of silence was not so much that of a conscious withholding at a specific moment, but a more abstract sense of undiscussability and absence, of items being taken off the agenda. The council officers were positioned as being silenced in two ways: through a physical exclusion from certain spaces in which the university team project planning was taking place; and through an expectation that certain topics, namely those relating to council control or involvement in this stage of the project, were no longer to be raised for discussion in the project group meetings.

The resources available to participants to speak up, and the requirements to stay silent, therefore were depicted as becoming uniquely allocated based on personal characteristics but also on organisational membership. After the 'Stockholm incident', the professional language of academic co-inquiry might be conceptualised as having developed a centripetal force that was imposing one particular set of meanings upon the project work delivery: that the work was to be delivered via the university team's standards of co-inquiry rather than the council's standards of consultation. This set of meanings made it difficult for Nina and Paul to raise certain suggestions and concerns and get them heard in a way that they might wish to be

heard. The issue of access to project resources, that participants talked about as otherwise being unavailable to the council officers, was highlighted as underpinning this centripetal force.

In the council officers' accounts, other additional characters from outside the project group, such as line managers and local councillors, were introduced, and the relationship with these other characters became intrinsic to the construction of when and why staying silent was evaluated as appropriate or not. On the one hand, council officers evaluated their temporary disengagement from the detail of the project work at this stage as an appropriate response based upon the pragmatic justification of finding a way to get project work done that was required of them in their work role but for which they had limited resources. On the other hand, for both Alison and Nina, a practice of staying silent was considered to be problematic at moments when they became positioned as not being able to meet the expectations of those to whom they were accountable, of not representing the organisation's interests or not being able to report back adequately.

The next chapter introduces some specific accounts of withholding as the co-inquiry events started to be delivered at a point about half-way through the project, and when I was actively involved in fieldwork. While it continues to develop some of the themes raised in this chapter, namely around the ontological meaning of staying silent, it moves the discussion away from discursive constructions of silence during processes of getting to know each other and concentrates in more detail on silence in relation to processes of professional learning and role delivery.

7 COUNCIL INVOLVEMENT IN A WORKSHOP

This second data chapter focuses on discussions about one of the co-inquiry events being organised by the university team and the specific question of who should be invited, or permitted, to attend. The event, a workshop, was discussed in two project group meetings about half-way through the project lifecycle. The chapter follows this two-fold structure, with an introduction firstly to the data pertaining to the first meeting, and some discussion of its implications; then the introduction of the data from the second meeting, and further discussion of that. The data is taken from transcripts of the meeting discussions, interviews with participants after both of these meetings, and my fieldnotes at various points over the project lifecycle. There is therefore more of an intertextual arrangement in this chapter than in the previous one, an approach that is also repeated in the next two chapters.

The chapter brings out two specific themes based on this arrangement of data. The first is developed from Kerry's detailed comments about her silence after the September discussion about the workshop, which raise the issue of how learning and knowledge is connected to staying silent. This theme is developed and illustrated by comparing and contrasting other participants' discourse about their general inclination towards staying silent, in order to show how these also relate in a variety of ways to processes of learning, developing knowledge, and the appropriate performance of job roles.

The second theme relates to some of the perlocutionary problems involved in silence: of making anticipatory judgments about how others are likely to respond, of knowing if someone is withholding or not, and of how to interpret someone's lack of verbal communication. Before the first workshop discussion in the September

meeting, there is an anticipation that Nina may raise a particular issue concerning one of the university team's proposals: in fact, it is Paul that does so. I compare Nina's silence in this first meeting to her actions in the second discussion about the workshop, and what seemed initially like it might be an opposite of silence - Nina speaking up in the way that had been originally anticipated. However, when a later account from Nina is analysed, this definition of her as speaking up turned out to be not so simple. Her later account about this interaction shows how she constructs silence as an emotional and more diffuse phenomenon, rather than as a discrete act of communication. Finally I compare this later account from Nina with an account given by Kerry that refers to the same interaction in the October meeting but constructs a very different interpretation from the events. These different individual interpretations point to the difficulty of pinpointing a definitive meaning for what is *not* said in conversations.

7.1 The first discussion about the workshop

Just before the September meeting of the project group started, that was taking place at the university site, I was chatting to Sean and Kerry as we waited for the other group members to arrive. Sean mentioned that he thought this meeting might be difficult because of one specific item on the agenda: they were going to be proposing that there be no council representative in attendance at a workshop they were planning to hold with members of the general public, and he thought that the council officers might complain. Although no names were mentioned, previous comments left a clear impression with me that it would be Nina who would be the one likely to complain, given the histories of interaction discussed in the previous chapter.

When we reached the agenda item in question, Kerry introduced the idea of the workshop that was being planned to take place in a month's time, and asked for names of people who the council officers might like to invite. The first suggestion came from Nina, who proposed inviting the whole of the 'Friends of the site' group that she and Paul had been developing as support for their longer-term project work. The group comprised local business people, residents and other useful contacts who had some interest in the site, and who might be influential in securing resources in the future. Their attendance would be useful, Nina suggested, because the group had expressed a desire to be more involved in the co-inquiry work and moreover had a role to advise the council and scrutinise the work.

This was not quite the response that had apparently been anticipated by Sean and Kerry in our pre-meeting chat. Moreover, to take a short detour, this moment of interplay also led to a responsiveness in the conversation between Sean and Nina that is at odds with their discursive construction of each other as characters. To illustrate this briefly, I provide some detail from the video recording. On her utterance of the word '*scrutinise*', Sean sat back in his chair with a shake of his head and said that he found that word problematic. As he said this, he raised his hands, palms face out, in what looked like a sign of resistance. Nina responded by explaining she was just trying to find a way to reconcile the two processes that the council and the university were developing. After a brief discussion, Sean suggested that the university team run some kind of session specifically for the Friends group, which would be separate from the workshop. All the attendees agreed that this would be a good idea. Nina's suggestion therefore had some positive resolution, despite the temporary conflict about wording. It is worth noting, therefore, that while both Sean and Nina often characterised the other as unchanging and inflexible, there were many occasions like

this when Sean would accommodate Nina's ideas and suggestions in the project meeting conversations. It was not the case that Nina simply remained silent, nor ineffective, during the project conversations.

Shortly after this, it was Paul, Nina's County Council colleague, who suggested someone from the council should attend the workshop. The following extract starts just before this point in the transcript.

Alison: Can I point out at this point that I'm I've got no nominations ((laughs)) because all of us are council .. people and and it would come through the people that are at, my .. I would like people who have actually engaged and left their details and are very keen

Paul: E- that's that's a point though, isn't it, is it, is it valid to have people from the *council* who have been involved in the process as well? Is it, is it not about the whole process or is it about the events that we've run?

Alison: If we're trying to just try something a bit *different* ...

Paul: No I'm not, I'm just saying, just one person you know

Alison: Yeah I know what you're saying, yeah, but if we're trying to do something different and we just want to .. put it out there and see what we get

Sean: My experience is that if there's someone there as a council representative it will change the dynamic considerably

Martin: Definitely

Sean: not for the better, no um I um, that's no offence to anyone here

Alison: No, no, that's fine

It was Alison rather than Sean that moved first to argue against the idea of council involvement. Nina did not speak in this interaction. I was interested that it had been Paul rather than her who had raised the issue of council attendance. When I asked him about this in our post-meeting conversation, Paul said actually it had been a

'throwaway comment', an idea that had just come into his head at that point and he did not mind one way or the other really about attending.

When I asked her in our post-meeting conversation if there was anything she had stayed silent about, Nina did not mention the workshop at all. Instead, she made a general remark about the worth of speaking up:

'Well there are lots of things I could have said, the fundamental question is, am I going to row or just get myself through this and out, and leave it all behind. It's just a judgement.'

Kerry, on the other hand, did raise the topic of the workshop in our conversation after the meeting, which took place a few days later. In the section below, I discuss how she contextualised her account of silence in relation to uncertainty about the workshop organisation. I use her account as a comparison to other participants' comments about silence in relation to learning and expertise.

7.2 Silence in relation to uncertainty, learning and experience

When I asked Kerry about anything that she had not spoken up about, she laughed and said there were a few things that she remembered not speaking up about at that meeting. She started with:

'I recall thinking that perhaps Nina should be there, that it would not be a problem if she was on the sidelines. But since the [university team] planning meeting yesterday, I think Sean's call was right, because Nina might jump in, she's not good at staying on the sidelines. Observing isn't what she does best. I feel bad about it, but I feel it is the right outcome.'

Kerry's silence is positioned here as being caught between a personal desire to include Nina in the workshop, downplaying the problem that her attendance would cause and feeling bad about Sean's decision, versus a professional deference to

Sean's judgment about how best to deliver the research work, and realising that Nina's exclusion is best in this regard. Her description sets a time limit to her silence: by the time our conversation takes place, she is no longer withholding, since she has constructed a new positioning for herself where she no longer holds that earlier opinion. It also brings a positive evaluation of having kept silent on the matter, by showing how ultimately it was appropriate to have excluded Nina: if she had suggested doing something different, it would have turned out to be a bad idea. She then continued with another example of her silence, although this began with a reference to a list of suggested contacts that Nina had sent her after the meeting:

I'm not sure how I'm going to manage this list and decide who to invite, and how to say this to Nina if the people on the list haven't already been involved in the previous events and therefore aren't eligible to attend.'

This point about knowing their level of involvement seemed to be at the crux of her dilemma. I asked, 'So is that what you think you should have talked about more?'

She replied, 'Yes, it might come back to bite me. Who am I to make the decision about who to invite?'

Before returning to a closer exploration of this account, I provide a little more detail of the conversation in the meeting to show how Kerry responds to this. The meeting discussion about the workshop invitations had included some detail about the type of person who would be ideal to attend. Here is Sean's summing up of the situation:

Sean: We want, the criteria for coming, or this would be our ideal person would be .. involved in the process a lot, erm, have a view but also be able to put that to one side so we don't want someone who's, you know, got a hobby horse and won't get off it

((Martin laughs))

Sean: ahm and, you know, can be a bit c- creative

There then follows a short discussion about whether they are discriminating against certain people and a concern raised by Martin that the selection of invitees may lead to problems:

Martin: I think what will happen is that it will, in the process of sort of nomination, *nomina-ting* and *choosing* it will create some issues

Alison: Yeah

Martin: which I'll, because I work there, I'll have to ... but I can cope with that, it's fine

Nina: It will be interesting because people talk to each other if if we send invites to five people in the area

Martin: Mm

Nina: Yeah and they talk about, you know, were you invited

Martin: I'll have people knocking on my office door⁴⁶

Alison: If it's broad enough, then maybe it won't be five people from the same area, then you need to say well we've we've selected people, we've only got so many places .. and we wanted a broader area

The significance of Kerry's talk about her own silence, then, seems to be connected to this problem of finding a reasonable way to select between invitees, where her choices might enter into a future angry dialogue with residents who have not been invited. Kerry positions herself as someone who might be challenged about decisions she takes to exclude people who have been suggested by the council officers. She is caught between the two different sides of the project's work, needing to satisfy on the one hand the university requirement of selecting people who can be creative and put their own views to one side (a requirement that will demand no small judgment from her about people's characters, some of whom she does not know or, at least, not well) and on the other hand the councils' and Martin's

⁴⁶ Martin's office is adjacent to the greenspace site in question.

requirements of being able to provide a justifiable, non-discriminatory reason for the selection (which is therefore not simply based on her interpretation of people's characters). Her lack of experience in her new university research role, her uncertainty about how to manage the list and how to justify her choice of inclusions or exclusions might 'come back to bite' her, she suggests.

Such discourse was reminiscent of her earlier introduction of herself to me as someone who was new to, and struggling to learn about, the principles of co-inquiry. When we were talking, for instance, in our first interview about her general thoughts about speaking up and staying silent, she not only stated that she did not like confrontation and arguments but related her situation as one in which she was still learning:

'I tend to step back if this [confrontation] happens and let someone else answer. Sometimes I have opinions but I don't always voice them, or express them very well, although in this project I'm mostly ok. I'm still learning about all this.'

She then identified another topic that she was 'brave' to speak up about in the meeting: she had queried and discouraged a suggestion that they should try and organise a parallel exhibition in an empty shop location in the city centre at the same time as the workshop. She justified her intervention to me:

'It would have an impact on my workload and I was worried about it. I've done that kind of thing before and it takes a lot of work, lugging stuff around, and that would all fall on me. It'd be ok if someone else goes gets the keys, finds the shop, gets the stuff. Speaking up about this at the meeting was actually unusual for me, it was a brave move.'

The justification for the raising of this challenge is that she knew from experience the implications of the suggestion that had been made. Her previous experience and

practical knowledge therefore allows her to offer some contribution on this topic. In contrast, what she constructs as her silence about the workshop refers to organising that she has not done before, where she is not entirely sure how to achieve the outcome, and where the choices she is going to make might not only affect the success of the project delivery but also have consequences for other project group members to whom she will be answerable.

The notion that questions or challenges are more easily made with increased knowledge and experience was a positioning developed also by other participants. For instance, as a response to my question about her general inclination towards speaking up and staying silent, Alison replied that her thoughts about speaking up had changed 'big time':

I used to be really shy, though I'm better now, if I don't understand something I might ask afterwards in a one to one conversation. There are comfort zones. If I'm in my comfort zone then I'm OK but if there are senior managers there and if they are talking about a subject like regeneration that I don't know about, then I'll feel intimidated. I don't think I've got a reputation for being the quiet person in the corner, I'm quite fortunate to know lots of people, so I can talk to them now.'

Alison constructs varying conditions for the choice to speak up or stay silent in relation to 'comfort zones' constructed across dimensions of: the presence of senior managers; the extent of knowledge about the subject matter; and knowing people. The conditions of shyness and feeling intimidated are contextualised and given limits: they sometimes apply, but not always.

Both Alison and Kerry's discourse suggests that knowing the subject matter makes it easier to speak up, and that there is some judgement in staying silent which is connected to learning and experience. The logical application of this discursive

positioning might be that silence would be a less reasonable choice when one is more knowledgeable and experienced. However, Paul notes that the prior condition of feeling knowledgeable and confident is not enough on its own to validate speaking up. He uses the idea of role and remit to provide a further dimension. I discuss this aspect in the next section.

7.3 Silence in relation to role duties: in-role and extra-role voice

When I asked him in our initial interview about his general inclination to speak up or to stay silent, Paul noted:

'It depends on how confident I am on the subject and in the role. I would probably stay quiet for the first few meetings and then when I'm feeling more confident, I'd speak more. If my remit isn't covered by what they are talking about, I wouldn't speak even if I had an opinion though.'

Similar to Alison and Kerry, he describes silence as a temporary practice until he feels more confident on the subject and in his role. However, he adds an extra component to the relationship: even when he is confident, silence is still appropriate if the subject matter on which he has an opinion is not covered in his remit. Staying silent is offered here as part of competent role performance, of knowing what is his business and what is not. Learning one's role requires an understanding both of when to speak up and when to stay silent. Such positioning, of course, also serves to validate the council officers' actions of disengaging at this stage of the project, and Alison reflected a somewhat similar positioning in her discourse in the previous chapter: that effectively she was trusting others to do their job (see Sections 6.2 and 6.3.1).

This discursive construction of the appropriateness of silence is particularly interesting in the context of this co-inquiry project, where the university's research objective was a different form of consultative engagement in which those without expert knowledge were being given the same status as those who might be considered experts. The importance of staying silent as part of a facilitative role within co-inquiry emerged in conversation with Kerry in the exit interview. She noted how Martin as an expert - and, she added, a generally friendly and talkative person - struggled with the idea of co-inquiry:

'He sometimes I think struggled with the .. co-inquiry in terms of .. he's so knowledgeable he can't help coming up with his own ideas and telling people what he thinks.'

Martin's role in the university co-inquiry team was not meant to be to tell people what he thought; he was meant to be facilitating the expression of what members of the general public thought. In one of the early conversations I had with Sean, he defined co-inquiry in this project as: where non-experts are involved in the 'ideas generation' part of a creative process. The identity of the audience as non-expert, and their equal involvement in the process of generating ideas, were emphasised. He said:

'Nearly everyone can contribute in a positive way but it needs orchestrating and facilitating. Martin isn't a co-inquirer because he won't give up the hierarchy of being an expert. He can't let go of that. You can become an expert in something, an expert designer, but then you need to move to a new set of skills to be an expert co-inquirer.'

There was a point therefore, according to Sean, when Martin was meant to stay silent and when he should not have been offering his own thoughts or opinions. Even though his previous expertise may generate useful insights and ideas, in this

particular situation, he was positioned as someone who should be remaining silent and allowing others the opportunity to speak up.

While other participants had emphasised how role, and role competence, defined and limited the timing and topics for speaking up, Martin's approach in our first discussion together was noticeably different. When I asked him about his inclination to speak up or stay silent, he answered:

'It's mid-level really. I often sit back and listen, but I'm also happy also to speak up.'

When I asked whether he had kept silent about anything in the meeting, he said:

'Well there are moments that pass where the conversation has already moved on. And if someone else raises the same issue, I'm happy to let it go.'

The positioning is not one relating to role or specific purpose to be performed in the group, but relates more to the immediate sense of what is happening within the conversation. His point of reference is the moment of social interaction and the conversation that is occurring, with a pragmatic emphasis on the difference that his own speaking up about an issue may make.

Martin's work identity spanned organisational boundaries in this project: he noted that he had contractual connections to other council projects as well as to the university team's co-inquiry research project. He also constructed certain responsibilities that he had towards residents and the general public.⁴⁷ His apparent willingness to ignore role boundaries seemed to be received well by Nina, for whom Martin carried out many unpaid tasks only loosely connected to the projects on

⁴⁷ See the example on page 166 where he discussed the potential implications for himself of how residents are chosen for the workshop.

which he was officially working.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, it led to controversy later in the project when Alison reported that the City Council had received complaints from other local landscape design companies that he was receiving an unfair competitive advantage in future tendering processes by being given inappropriate access to council information. He became positioned as someone pursuing his own agenda and objectives rather than being involved on behalf of any recognised authority, and after the October meeting was no longer able to attend project group meetings.

7.4 The second discussion about the workshop: Nina speaking up

I now return to the theme of judging someone else's withholding, and the nature of silence and voice, using data from the second discussion about the workshop which took place in October. The meeting took place a few days before the workshop was due, and the agenda included an update on the workshop planning. The need for Kerry to select and exclude people from attending had not in fact occurred, since many people on Nina's list had not been free on the planned date. In the transcript extract below, Kerry had just requested that people send her more names of potential invitees, because they were still short on final numbers. It was at this point that Nina raised the idea that there should be a council observer in attendance.

Kerry: if you do think of anybody then send them my way. We're meeting tomorrow morning to plan that .. erm .. and yeah pretty organised on that ..

Sean: Yeah

Kerry: so

Paul: What date is that again sorry Kerry?

⁴⁸ An example is given in the next chapter, where he delivers some community talks to progress the councils' project.

Kerry: Um it's next Thursday, it's a week tomorrow

((2 second pause))

Nina: It's ah I think it would be useful for one of us to go as an observer.
Alison, Paul or me

Sean: But we agreed at last meeting that we would ... it would change the
dynamic

Nina: Yeah ... no, not to be part of the group ... but the thing is if we are to
learn about, you know, that there is various objectives of this process
... it would just be quite

((Alison enters the room))

Alison: Sorry

Nina: or if you can just document it it would be quite useful, it would be
interesting for us

Sean: Yeah

Nina: to just, you know

Sean: It'll be

Nina: understand what you've done

Sean: It'll be very

Nina: I don't need to be there but

Sean: It will be very well documented, I think that's the way to do it

Nina's comment that she, Alison or Paul should attend the workshop, was the type of proposition that Sean and I had been anticipating in the previous meeting. However, the topic was soon resolved. Voices were not raised but remained amicable, although it was noticeable that Sean stopped doodling on a piece of paper and looked up at Nina when she said the word 'observer'. What is notable is that while all the indications might have been that a suggestion for a council representative to attend the workshop would be futile, this did not stop Nina: she voiced the idea anyway, in the space of the two second gap (an acoustic silence) in the conversation, when no-

one else was speaking. She just failed to secure the outcome that she may have wanted: she dropped the idea and changed tack, to 'just document[ing]' the workshop, as Alison entered the room on her late arrival to the meeting.

7.5 Two accounts about the workshop and different types of silence

The workshop was possibly eclipsed as a topic in the conversations I had with participants after this meeting because an argument that developed about another matter took precedence (see Chapter 8). However, there were two occasions when the workshop was raised again, in the exit interviews with Kerry and Nina. This section compares and contrasts these accounts, in order to develop the argument that interpretations of other people's silence can be markedly different from that described by the individuals themselves, and to suggest that it is remarkably hard to use productively the clear-cut theoretical categories of silence and voice in the OB literature in this empirical setting.

7.5.1 Nina: the workshop conversation as a site of frustration

After the project stage with the university had formally finished, during the exit interview, Nina mentioned the workshop when she was describing for me any key moments in the project:

- N: We felt a bit unloved at times I have to say, and you think oh whatever, what does it matter, and we weren't allowed to go to the, to their, to this one workshop where er that was prioritising, I think ha, I would have quite liked to *go* even if just to observe ...
- C: At the time were you thinking in the meeting, hang on a minute, I really want to go, but didn't kind of push for it to happen, or was it only afterwards

N: Well, you know, I *wanted* to go but then when I was told I'm not allowed to go, you know, sort of thing, I didn't feel it was like worth fighting for

This was a notable piece of data during my fieldwork since it represented one of the very few times that Nina commented on a precise moment of interaction in talk about her own silence. Apart from this, her answers to my questions about what she withheld tended to be generalised (see the example on page 164) or they redirected my questions to a different topic (see page 193). The data is notable also for the way in which her utterance here contrasts to how she did speak up in the meeting about the matter of attendance: there is a silence of 'not fighting for' attendance. As she noted in Section 6.3.1, she had thrown in what she wanted to say and then 'glossed over it' without bothering to fight further.

She continued:

'... I think there was a lot of that throughout the process where, you know, it makes life easier, and and, you know, OK if that's how we're .. and then and then, you know, if that sets us in and we get on better, well to some extent, as long as there's no resentment ... um and and that was er ... that point came in the process where er we just let go of certain expectations and then you know it was easier to get on with.'

Nina talks about how they 'just let go of certain expectations'. She describes a negative and frustrating state of only partial engagement, but one which has the function of making life ultimately easier and allowing the members of the project group to get on better. If others in the group had wanted to take up her point, that could have been an option; in fact, her utterance about council attendance was one that Sean had already been anticipating from the previous meeting and he closed down the conversation about it. This interplay in the October meeting might therefore be described as voice: Nina did verbalise the proposition. Alternatively, it

might be described as silence, since she did not develop the argument and fight for it with the intensity that she might have done. Regardless of either, the outcome seems to be that her desire to attend was not acknowledged and that this has led to her apparently fighting her resentment.

7.5.2 Kerry: the workshop conversation as indication of satisfaction

The discussions about the workshop are utilised as a resource in a very different way in Kerry's exit interview. We had just been talking about key moments of change in the project group's relationships, and Kerry had suggested that working with Nina informally had helped to address some of the friction in the early days of the project. Then she noted:

K: Yeah, like things like, you know, we made the decision like you can't come to the visioning workshop, they were cool with that, if we'd said that at the start there'd have been a real... ((she grimaces))

C: Yeah

K: you know, but there wasn't, I think she [Nina] was the one that was most concerned about the co-inquiry process so was ... as as [design team member] said, she was our client, she was our .. the happier Nina is, the easier this is

The contrast between Kerry's account and Nina's account of the workshop's interaction is striking. Kerry points to the workshop discussion as evidence to show how the council officers had become happier with the project ('they were cool with that'). The lack of argument is conceptualised as showing how the co-inquiry process had become more accepted and that Nina was now happier. Yet Nina raises the interaction in relation to feeling unloved, and to show how it had become no longer worth fighting for involvement.

The possibly obvious point emerging from Nina and Kerry's contrasting perspectives is that what is *not* talked about in social interaction is just as open to interpretation, and to being used in constructing others' intentions and emotions, as what *is* talked about. The resources that Kerry uses to construct the contentment of the council officers at this point in the project relies on a discursive absence and a lack of open conflict, as much as any linguistic content.

7.6 Summary of emergent themes

This chapter has discussed the idea of silence as a discursive construction in relation to processes of learning and knowledge accumulation. In accounts presented here, participants discursively embedded the phenomenon of silence within the early stages of learning about a new subject or when someone is still uncertain about how to perform a role, and with the inference that speaking up would become easier once more experience and knowledge had been accumulated. While Kerry's account of staying silent drew on her position as a novice in relation to Sean and the professional language of co-inquiry that she was not yet able to use convincingly, the practice of staying silent in other accounts from Paul and Sean was associated with the demonstration of expert role performance. Staying silent in this regard takes on a variable social meaning in relation to the discursive categories of novice and expert.

The suggestion in these accounts is that different roles performed by different individual role-holders demand different patterns of silence. To be identified as a competent professional would require both learning the appropriate professional discourse - the terminology, the concepts associated with the role, and so on, as noted in Chapter 6 by Alison and Paul - but also learning the normative patterns of when, where and with whom to use (or not) that discourse. Hence, while in Chapter

6 Nina was the subject of Sean's criticism for talking in a way that he suggested was not helpful for his research team's development - and thus she became excluded from, and silenced in relation to, certain parts of the project delivery - in this chapter Martin was the subject of criticism for talking at the wrong time, for being involved inappropriately and not demonstrating sufficiently well an understanding of the times when he should have remained silent. It is worth noting that in these discursive constructions, silence is evaluated far more positively than in much of the OB literature, and that it is voice that is positioned as the problematic activity.

A number of different forms of silence have started to emerge more strongly in the data in this chapter. Some of the discursive constructions of staying silent in participants' accounts pertained to very specific moments in meetings - silence as the withholding of particular thoughts within the conversation - such as in Kerry's account of her unexpressed thoughts about Nina's possible attendance at the workshop, and her own uncertainty about how to organise the invitations to the workshop. However, there were also more diffuse feelings, about the quality of engagement between people, that were formulated as silence in other accounts.

Nina's talk about not having fought for attendance at the workshop situates a practice of staying silent in relation to her not feeling able to get her point across and be heard in the desired way in this project setting rather than as an action of not speaking up at all in the project group meeting (a voiced utterance being empirically demonstrable from the transcript of the project meeting). As such, I start to question the nature of what constitutes silence and to raise the possibility that silence is not simply an opposite of voice, where an action of speaking up would somehow cancel out an action of staying silent. More specifically, the data in this chapter provokes questions about how silence might be conceptualised temporally: as an act situated

within a discrete, empirical moment of social interaction or in much looser but more embodied emotional and relational terms, as a phenomenon that ranges across time and social space.

Finally, this perspective on silence as a relational phenomenon was further developed in another way in this chapter: in relation to how someone's lack of verbal communication, an absence of talk, in a social situation can contribute to how others interpret their psychological state and their motives in that social interaction.

Different personal perspectives about what happened in the project group meetings in this chapter were based on what was *not* said as well as what *was* said. Nina's lack of speaking up was used by Kerry as evidence for Nina's happier psychological state at that point in the project. Kerry's perlocutionary account of Nina's absence of discourse can moreover be contrasted with Nina's own illocutionary explication of her silence as an action of 'not fighting for'. In addition, a lack of speaking may contribute to the moments when someone is interpreted as being engaged in a practice of withholding. I inferred that Nina might have been withholding her thoughts during the first discussion about the workshop based on how I had interacted with her previously and what I had been told about her by others up to that point in the project. My inference was based on an anticipation of what she might do and say. The chapter therefore picks up a point made in Chapter 2, that an individual's social silence, as an absence of sound, is an integral part of communicative meaning-making, but notes from a Bakhtinian perspective that the precise meaning that is inferred is socially embedded and contingent in nature.

The next chapter offers some further accounts of silence, this time dealing more explicitly with the theme of conflict. The discussion turns to how choices between

speaking up and staying silent might be properly negotiated and justified, and how silence and voice become connected to argument, embarrassment and risk.

8 COMMUNITY TALKS AND POSTERS

The focus in this chapter around which the discussion of silence is organised is the preparatory work for two community talks being carried out by Nina and Martin in order to promote the community-based framework through which to implement the greenspace site's enhancement. This enhancement was, of course, the councils' long-term objective. Some of the community engagement originally envisaged to be delivered by the university team had had to be dropped early on, due to certain changes in the calculation of funds available for the research project. Thus these talks were proposed by the County Council officers as filling that gap.

The community talks were discussed in two different project group meetings. In the first, the discussion was positive, and Nina's incorporation of the language of co-inquiry within her own organising activities was successful. However, in the second meeting, a heated argument broke out about the design of some posters produced to advertise the talks. The argument revolves around the precise use of words and images, and around issues of ownership and representation. It is this argument which became a significant topic during my post-meeting conversations, and which was used by participants to discuss not only their own silence but also to pass judgment on other participants' acts of speaking up. The chapter starts with a significant amount of detail from the transcripts of the two meetings, so that the reader can get a sense of the unfolding dialogue, the shifts in interplay between different participants, and how the accounts that are then offered in the chapter drew on these conversations.

The chapter concentrates primarily on how silence is implicitly constructed as an action that participants *should* have engaged in instead of voice, when silence may

be a preferable option to speaking up. I provide two examples of very different ways in which participants construct positions of being caught between different people in which their voice is constructed as problematic. I also present four different tactics that are discursively constructed and offered as a way in which choices between speaking up and staying silent might be negotiated in situations where conflict or embarrassment may arise. Lastly, the chapter deals with the temporal nature of constructions of silence, and how silence becomes problematic in hindsight when the consequences of actions can be evaluated.

8.1 The first conversation about the talks

In the September meeting of the group, Nina proposed the idea of holding two community talks that Martin would deliver as a landscape management expert. Nina justified the talks as a way to pick up some of the engagement needed to progress the councils' longer-term work on the site, and in particular to respond to a few City councillors' complaints about the project: these talks would help explain the context and the statutory reasons why this long-term project was needed to enhance and manage the site in a certain way. She and Martin had discussed the idea prior to the project meeting, and it was something that Martin was doing voluntarily over and above any job remit. Nina explained the reason for bringing the agenda item to this group meeting:

Nina: There are some complications that we touched on earlier around branding and and you know, how do we package things up and also .. er because Martin's legitimacy in this process is through .. the Co-De process

Martin: Yeah

Nina: So can we say, we, our idea was, and we're just taking it to this group, that we don't do it through Co-De and we say Martin is a landscape

designer and he's working on sort of the Co-De process ... make *reference* to the process but not

Martin: Yeah

Nina: package it, that's what
[we thought might be the way

Sean: [Yeah yeah

Martin: [That was the idea really

Nina: the best way forward

Kerry: Yeah

Sean: I think um.. I *agree* um.. yeah no, absolutely I agree, that's not a problem at all

Sean not only seemed to find the idea unproblematic but also proceeded to suggest there might actually be a positive spin-off for the university work in that it showed how their project was having wider impact.

Nina identified a particular goal that might emerge not just from the community talks but also from this project more generally, that the residents would develop more of a voice of their own:

Nina: It it it is er ... in a way I think one of the ... big ideas that came out of the process are that the residents need to have a, you know ... a representation and and and a voice, so in a way

Sean: Mhm

Nina: that that ... you know I haven't seen all the ideas but from, you know, from my perspective that can be one of the key outcomes and in a way, yeah OK, the [full public detail of the co-inquiry process] is later but because we need to work with these people, starting to have, you know, the communication, it is one of the, one of the outcomes of the process that I would expect

In the same way as the Friends group had been incorporated into the university team's planning during the discussions in the previous chapter (Section 7.1), Sean

also responded to Nina's introduction of the idea of involving the residents more in the co-inquiry process, by offering to run a specific workshop session with them.

Nina welcomed the idea:

'Yes definitely. They were very keen that we should do something different'

The 'they' in Nina's utterance brought into the conversation the members of the public to whom she had been talking during our delivery of flyers for Co-De's events round the local housing estates. The language of 'doing something different' was part of the descriptive language of co-inquiry being used in these flyers produced by the university team.

Alison's response to the idea of the talks, however, was slightly more muted. She elaborated a concern of hers, which constructed a particular view not only on communication and correct process, but also highlighted some tension between the County and City Council officers, in terms of who would physically need to be present at the community talks to validate them:

Alison: often erm.. you have meetings and there's good ideas

Nina: Yeah

Alison: and then it's not communicated back to us because unfortunately we can't get representatives to either of those because obviously the one on the 22nd was set up before we realised that nobody could attend

Nina: But [*council officer*] is going

Alison: Oh yeah but he is only talking about [*site*], he's got no other remit apart from that. So if you discuss anything else then he's only got a very specific remit

Nina: yeah

Alison: erm.. and then obviously the one on the seventh I know [*manager*]'s still on holiday so he can't attend ... he would be the person *really*

Nina: [It doesn't

Alison: [Even if it was just to sit down and hear what was going on because ..
erm he needs to know those opinions and points of view because he's
the one implementing it and making the decisions in the long run

Alison identifies in this extract a particular category of council representative who should be present at these talks in order to hear officially the conversation and to be able to action the points made in terms of 'implementing and making the decisions in the long run'. In response, Nina offered to change the date so they could invite a City Council manager to attend, and the conversation moved on to the next agenda item.

8.2 The second discussion about the talks

At the next meeting in October, when the group reached the agenda item on the update about the community talks, Nina circulated copies of two posters she had designed to advertise them. The posters included the specific name for the project that was being used by the university team, Quay to the Manor, a photo of the site as a background image, and copy text that indicated that members of the Co-De team would be present at the talk to answer questions. I was surprised by their appearance. They looked like posters designed by someone with little computer skill. Sean's demeanour immediately changed as he inspected the copies. During the conversation in the transcript which follows, although he kept the pitch of his voice level, his physical image belied any calmness, with his jaw tightly clenched, deep sighs and humming as audible expressions of frustration, and vigorous circling and underlining of parts of the poster with felt tip pen:

Sean: So when we talked about these events, we, it was ... described that
Quay to the Manor was incidental

Alison: Yes

Sean: to the content. But actually it's *not* incidental in that it's Quay to the Manor

Alison: Yeah

Nina: Mhm

Sean: and it so it's um it's kind of trampling over the Quay to the Manor brand

Alison: OK

Sean: but in a *bad* .. in ... not that this, yeah it's just not good .. erm branding wise to have a diff- to have a very, to have the Quay to the Manor so prominent

Nina responded to this issue of branding:

Nina: It was a real difficulty Sean to er because the the whole public interface has been Quay to the Manor so far and I think we've talked about this before in that we, and er we've run it past Kerry, that we will be using the Quay to the Manor *wording* without, I mean we haven't used any any logos on it or any- you know

Nina's implicit reasoning is that while logos may provoke some issue of ownership, words are not in that owned category and are available for re-use.

Alison then proceeded to find a different reason to object to one of the posters, that the title of the talk might irritate City Council officers, since it seemed to encroach on what was their responsibility:

Alison: It might be a bit ... I don't know about this word, inflammatory to call it landscape *management* because that's what the City Council's supposed to be doing, in like, well, why is someone coming to talk about landscape management on our site [...] because we'll put people's backs up

Nina: People's backs are are,
[well all these meetings

Martin: [Well we're going to upset some people already

Nina: because people's backs are already up

((Martin laughs))

Alison: You really don't want to offend City councillors and City Council staff if you want them on side for the rest of the project

Even though the talks were designed largely to address City councillor concerns about the project, Alison raised the prospect that the flyer's offence might undo that purpose. She then complained that she had never received the second poster to review, and that the poster was problematic due to how the distinct duties and responsibilities of the two councils were described:

Alison: It doesn't mention the City Council .. working, it says [____] County Council is now working with the university um

Nina: yeah

Alison: and I'm just I can I can just see it might not happen, I might be overreacting

Martin: It has [____] City Council

Paul: It says district
[doesn't it

Alison: [yes but it doesn't say that we're now working, it's our project

Nina: Yeah

Alison: and some people will just could potentially

Kerry: But but is that not working with the district?

Martin: Yeah

Kerry: is that not

Alison: It's '[____] City Council [*regeneration programme*] has identified' .. potential partners and then [_] County Council which *already* I'm having to explain

Nina: Yeah

Alison: why we're not project managing it because we haven't got the staff ((laughs)) is now working with the university, and I have a *role* to make sure that we're mentioned as well ((Sean sighs)) as when I do anything Nina reminds me time and time again

Paul: Yeah

Alison: they need to be mentioned

There is in this extract some tension between the City and County Council officers, with Alison identifying at this point that it is her role to make sure the City Council is given due credit, in the same way that Nina reminded her 'time and time again' that the County Council needed to be mentioned.

Alison and Sean constructed different problems arising from elements of the posters' text. For Alison, it was the potential reaction of City Council staff and elected members; for Sean, it was the potential confusion of the research project brand. The conversation then became focused on who was and was not part of the Co-De project team:

Sean: It it says here the Quay to the Manor team *and* landscape designer will be present so ... but the Quay to the Manor team *won't* be present .. there .. so one of the one of the team

Nina: Not not the full, we we are part of the team Sean and uh

((pause))

Sean: Well uh I think mm mhmhm ((hums))

Nina: that the can I, the problem with the communication and we talked about this this morning again is that the *only* public interface .. so far has been Quay to the Manor that

Nina's reference to what they had talked about that morning was to a Project Board meeting discussion, with the concerned voice of the Board members raising the issue of the public interface up to that point. Control of the public profile of the project

underpins the interplay between Sean and Nina as they contest the words used on the poster: who counts as part of the QtM team, who can represent the project and use the branding.

Sean continued:

Sean: So we're happy for you to take the brand

Nina: Yeah

Sean: but we don't want it m- *messed* with

Nina: Yeah

Sean: while we're still using it

It then becomes the timing and the nature of the interaction between the university's work and the councils' work that Sean identifies as his concern, in that the brand may become 'messed with'. While in the previous meeting he had been positive about the research having a wider impact, here the wider dispersal had become a difficulty, with the new meaning of the words Quay to the Manor becoming potentially tainted through being uttered by, and associated with, the local authority voice before Sean has finished with them. Nina replied:

Nina: Well we we haven't nyuh .. we haven't taken the *full* brand and now I've I've discussed it with Martin, I've discussed it with Kerry yeah I ah ye- it- we haven't, equally we haven't put any logos on it, we haven't put any full branding on it, yes we have er used the ... the *phrasing* and it it has been *difficult* but we- to get this right, ah I appreciate that you, you know, are not completely happy, I'm not, you know, it's been not easy for us, and that's what we, you know, have discussed it with various people and this is what we came up with and this is what we .. ended up with

((pause))

During the discussion, Sean had already suggested various changes to the wording of the posters in order to establish a greater distance between the community talks and

the QtM project. His final suggestion completely cut off the link between the talks and the greenspace site, by not using the QtM name at all and not referring explicitly to the site in question. At this stage Paul became involved in the discussion:

Nina: How do we, how do we create that link then, if if we take out Quay to the Manor, what do we

Paul: What are people turning up to?

Nina: [Because uh

Paul: [They're turning up to a talk about landscape and ecology but, you know, it needs to be about the site doesn't it

From this point Paul started to contest more directly some of the claims that Sean was making and there was a more confrontational stance between them as in this extract about a minute later:

Sean: ((coughs)) So we agreed that you would *only* do the technical side of things until we handed over to you ... for um

Paul: No, I I don't think we did

Nina: I don't think we did

Sean: We did, check the minutes,⁴⁹ and I'll tell you *exactly*, that's what we agreed

Paul: No, we discussed consultation, we discussed these events, all these events especially at the last meeting, didn't we

Sean: But not, er not under the banner of Quay to the Manor

Paul: No but we said we would be *doing* .. and we had a brief discussion about it

At this point, in the next extract, Sean directly confronted Kerry with a query about what she had seen of these posters. During most of the argument up until this point,

⁴⁹ I had presumed at this point that Sean was so certain about this inclusion in the minutes because he had had a hand in writing them: in fact the minutes say nothing about this matter.

she had remained in the same position, hiding the sides of her face with her hands, elbows glued to the table, and keeping her eye contact firmly fixed on the poster lying in front of her. She continued in this position during the next extract:

Sean: So erm Kerry did you see a draft of this?

Kerry: Yes.. I didn't .. think it was .. because I thought it was so different that it was ... clearly not ..
[*us*]

Sean: [On Saturday I said I had someone saying why is there a Quay to the Manor event in the [community centre] it's *miles* away, what's that got to do with Quay to the Manor

Nina: Yeah well we get that all the time Sean. We have to

Martin: Well that's fairly easily answered, isn't it

Sean: Well yeah but

Martin: I think it is

A voice of an anonymous interlocutor is used by Sean in this extract, who seeks clarification about the relationship between this event 'miles away' and his own research project, in a way that contradicts Kerry's suggestion that the two are 'clearly' different from each other. Nina, however, points out that Sean is only encountering the type of question that the rest of them have been getting all the time, with Martin adding that it is easily answered. None of Sean's lines of argument had met with much sympathy other than by Alison. This was an unusual episode in the meetings in that regard, in that all the others had argued against him at some point. The 'trampling' on the brand had been excused by Nina since this brand had been the only public interface so far. Paul had pointed out Sean's suggestions to delete the wording to the university project or the site would make the talks effectively redundant, since the public would not know the point of them, and that they had in fact discussed this

previously in the group. Finally, Martin had pointed out the difficulties of having to explain the relationship between the two projects was a relatively minor and easily solvable problem.

The argument dissipated after Nina had had to depart from the meeting early to attend a pre-planned appointment, and after Alison had negotiated various changes to the text to be done by the County officers with a promise to re-circulate the new posters to the locations in which they were to be displayed. After the meeting finished, Sean and Alison left the room together to discuss some other work that they had started to develop together, and the rest of the group stayed to tidy up. Martin, Kerry and Paul discussed the argument and agreed that Sean had vastly over-reacted, and that the posters were not that problematic. They described the meeting to me as one of the worst they had had for a while and joked that 'at least you've got something to write about now,' a sentiment which was mirrored in almost all the individual conversations I had with participants over the next few days.

8.3 Silence when caught in the middle

The accounts of people's silence that were given to me after this meeting tended to focus on the argument about the posters. There is a particularly strong positioning feature that emerged in the talk: descriptions of silence in relation to being caught between two different people in the group, in a situation in which voice is seen as problematic. I give two examples of this, from Nina and from Martin, which, while they both have the same structure of being caught in the middle, are underpinned by very different logics, with very different networks of social relationships. For Nina, her description embeds her action in a wide web of social relationships; for Martin, it

is the very precise interpersonal nature, and the deep understanding of the individual person, which he draws on to demonstrate the issues of silence and voice.

8.3.1 Nina, caught between Sean and Kerry

My conversation with Nina after the meeting quickly turned into a monologue from her. It was hard to get a word in to the conversation. When I asked my first question, how the meeting had been for her, she immediately said:

'Dreadful, unpleasant, now you're able to see how things lurk. You know, partnership working is not easy, sometimes things work well and then suddenly the whole thing blows up. I feel a bit naive for thinking I could get away with it. I'm annoyed with Co-De for leaving us in this situation though. They were originally going to do this event, but then they said they had no resources so it's been left to the council to do. It was meant to be a *community*-owned initiative rather than a council initiative. But the goalposts keep changing.'

When I asked her about anything she might have kept silent about, she commented:

'Well, it was all quite peculiar, Sean undermined Kerry very badly too, he seems quite controlling, it was clear that he was angry. I felt like I had to defend myself but I didn't want to get Kerry into trouble.'

Her answer redirects my question. Her response about her own silence behaviour in this utterance becomes framed by Sean's personal characteristics (he is controlling) and his behaviour (his angriness, and his undermining of Kerry), and is subsequently positioned between the conflicting desires to defend herself and not to get Kerry into trouble. If she stays silent, she compromises her own integrity; if she speaks up, she compromises Kerry's integrity.

It seemed to be the action of speaking up to defend herself, rather than any withholding, which was problematic for her though, since she then emphasised:

I emailed Kerry after the meeting to apologise, but that was the process [what she described in the meeting] that had happened.'

I suggested, 'So actually you were uncomfortable with what you *had* said rather than with what you *hadn't* said?'

She did not respond directly to the question. Instead she said:

'Well, I try to stay out of Sean's way. There's no point in trying to sort it out, all this will soon be over. He seems to have a peculiar character and doesn't try to dress his emotion, he can be really rude and maybe he's unaware of it. Everyone else seems to be on the same wavelength as me, it's just Sean that doesn't seem to have any flexibility to work in partnership.'

Her redirected answer now reiterates the positioning of it being futile to improve the situation due to Sean's 'peculiar character' and how she just tries to stay out of his way at this point in the project, that it is only with him that she has a problem and that this is derived from his inflexibility to work in partnership. However, there are difficulties that arise by her staying out of his way, which are unfolding elsewhere. It seemed not just that she was stuck between Kerry and Sean, but more importantly between other groups of people, as she continued:

'I just have to be so careful, on my toes, how you phrase things, I realise in this whole project how vulnerable we are, how vulnerable we are making ourselves. Co-De are king on top, they've got all the process and we're stuck with all the problems. If things blow up, it's our necks. One of the problems is that Alison has not been in the office for four weeks. I feel quite annoyed, we are making quite a wave but the City councillors are not aware of it, they are attacking what we are doing and don't understand what and why we are doing it. Up to now it's all been a bit of a game, but now we are going back to the City with demands so the situation is changing. They let you plod on, and you do the best you can with updates, but they're not really interested.'

The being on her toes and the careful phrasing has now spilt out of this moment in the October meeting. She is now not just positioned as caught between Sean and

Kerry, but also between the university research team and the City Council: trying to find ways to engage with the City Council, but with little interest being shown by councillors in her updates and, worse, with them attacking what she and Paul are doing. Even though Nina identifies 'one of the problems' as being Alison's recent absence, her complaint does not seem to be directed at Alison personally. It seems to be more that Alison's absence has meant other City Council staff are not engaging. It is through Alison that Nina is influencing others in the council.

The tensions at play in this argument within the meeting were then developed even further, with her being caught between the City Council and the general public:

'We really want to get away from council-bashing, but it's really delicate, you need to let people say what they want to but without council-bashing. From now to next month, there's lots of potential for things to go wrong. Other councils encourage residents groups, but this one doesn't. I just hope the residents association will become strong.'

During our very first discussion, when I first joined the project group for my fieldwork, Nina had described herself to me as a 'grassroots activist' and had expressed the sentiment that it was 'better to be on the inside rather than on the outside'. Such ideology is reflected again here in her hope that the residents association becomes strong. The positioning designates residents as citizens caught up in a conflict with the City Council and with whom Nina is negotiating to find ways for them to be involved, but not wanting on the other hand to encourage 'council-bashing'. Her own voice within the City Council is not proving effective, however. Meanwhile, neither is she being able to engage effectively with Sean. However, with him, she has the option of just trying to stay out of his way. Her discourse positions her as being caught in wider networks of social relations in which she is trying to operate as best she can in less than ideal circumstances.

8.3.2 Martin, caught between Sean and Nina

The tensions of trying to manage two different relationships with different social obligations and expectations at the same time were brought out also in the conversation I had with Martin. During the argument in the meeting, he had oscillated between on the one hand responding to Sean's points, confirming that he could, and would, address all Sean's concerns during the community talks, to make sure there was no confusion between the two pieces of project work, and on the other hand trying to downplay the severity of the situation and to support Nina's line. I asked him how the meeting had been for him, and he said fine, that you get people flaring up - 'well really just Sean, it wasn't Nina' - and that everyone was trying to accommodate that.

When I asked him about anything he had kept silent about, he said:

I can't say I was happy with everything I said, because the situation was emotional, it shows the underlying hostility that Sean feels towards Nina and that's rather sad. My natural fall-back position is to try and ease and ameliorate the situation, my natural default is to care for people. I felt protective of Nina but also of Sean because I know there are some other reasons why Sean would have other things on his mind right now.'

Like Nina, Martin answered my question by describing the problematic nature of what he *had* said rather than giving any account of what he had not said. Martin's discourse positions him as being caught in a way that is described in much more personal terms than Nina's account above, between people as individuals who he knows and is trying to care for. Martin connects the idea of speaking up or staying silent with the emotional connection with the people in the group. He suggests that there are utterances that he should not have said (though he never specifies what) and that he now regrets, identifying the emotional nature of the situation as to blame for

such communication, and implicitly suggesting that silence might have been the preferable option. He feels 'protective' towards Nina, but also can empathise with Sean and the personal and hidden reasons why he might have other things on his mind. Yet, what he effectively proposes is a more complicated version of communication: that there may be times when there is a difficulty of staying silent *and* of speaking up.

In the next section I cover some of the divergent ways in which participants talked about speaking up and staying silent at times when conversation is somehow difficult, and where utterances may hurt or embarrass someone. Martin and Paul both offer examples of how to avoid such consequences; Sean and Alison offer examples when the consequent embarrassment or awkwardness is justified.

8.4 Constructing appropriate communication during conflict

8.4.1 Martin: silence and temporary deferral

Throughout the project, Martin never identified a particular act of withholding in any of the discussions with me. Instead, he talked about his practice of silence in general terms, as in the exit interview below. During this extract, I wanted to check that we were talking about similar conceptualisations of silence as withholding.

- M: I'm always thinking about .. the people in the meetings all the time, trying to ameliorate these emotional outbursts, trying to help people and assist
- C: So, how do you do this? Does that mean you don't necessarily say what you really think sometimes?
- M: Yeah that's right, it *does* mean that
- C: So actually there's quite a lot of silences

- M: Yes, it does mean that. Because I think silence is *constructive* ...
Yeah, I think we're not silent enough
- C: In terms of not absence of sound, but in terms of withholding the ideas that we've got?
- M: Definitely, I do that, yeah if I think that .. by saying something it would aggravate or hurt other individuals, unless I think it's absolutely necessary, I would withhold it
- C: When would it be absolutely necessary?
- M: Now that's a good question, isn't it really? I'd have to think. When would it be absolutely necessary? It would be absolutely necessary if there was an issue of harm coming to an individual or if there was something that was ethically incorrect or morally wrong
- C: So, not so much to do with the kind of project delivery so much
- M: No
- C: but actually in terms of harm to individuals
- M: No, because project delivery, project delivery is a much longer-term issue than a conversation in a meeting
- C: Ah right yeah OK
- M: because it can always be addressed in the following meeting, or in a little sub-group. There's always, well perhaps not always, an opportunity to revisit an issue that you've kept silent about

Martin talks about staying silent as a constructive tactic of temporary deferral in particular social situations - what might be seen as a speech genre approach, in which certain utterances become appropriate and available in certain social interactions - of choosing another more appropriate time and place to speak up. Temporary withholding is here not only acceptable but desirable if it would otherwise cause immediate hurt to individuals. He invokes a language of ethics and morals to justify a more immediate voice. Given that 'project delivery is a much longer-term issue than a conversation in a meeting', one can (usually) take up the

issue at a later time when the circumstances are more fitting: the work of project delivery can always be changed or undone through other conversations later.

8.4.2 Paul: politeness and dropping issues

Paul talks about a similar problem of how to avoid conflict but the tactic is rather different: not of simply transferring the same words to a different time and place, but of altering the form of the utterance within that time and place to be more acceptable.

When I asked Paul after the October meeting what he might have edited out of the meeting conversation, he said, 'I don't think anything was edited from that meeting.'

The heated nature of the argument was used to infer that no withholding was likely to have taken place.

In my very first interview with him, Paul described his inclination about speaking up or staying silent as:

I'd avoid conflict if it's a minor thing, it's not worth it. I guess you respond to the person, you get to know what they're like. If it was a major issue, you'd have to say something, if it would affect the project, then obviously you would have to say something, you would have to deal with the conflict.'

If it is a 'minor thing' therefore, he suggests he may not raise it. He refers to the issue of politeness a number of times in our conversations over the months to the extent that I asked him about this specifically during our exit interview. The extract below is situated towards the end of the interview, as I was reporting back to him some of my initial thoughts from analysing the transcripts of the meeting interactions.

C: Alright and the final thing is about looking back at the transcripts and you're so polite

P: Am I? Oh dear!

- C: Yeah and I just wondered whether you were consciously like that or .. are you aware .. of that?
- P: No er .. Nina says that when I'm emailing people as well
- C: Ha ha ha ha, in a good way, I'm not complaining about it! I was just sort of interested if that's something that .. that's important to you or if you're aware of it or ...
- [does it mean]
- P: [Er I'm aware]
- C: you're holding back on stuff or not?
- P: Not particularly, no, I'm just hopefully, I just say it in a different way
- C: Yeah
- P: I don't know, I make a conscious effort not to be aggressive or overly blunt when you don't need to be so .. but no, I suppose that's how I am anyway

My observation of Paul as a polite person who may thus be withholding was met with some protestation. Politeness and withholding are proposed here by Paul as unrelated. The 'conscious effort' that Paul constructs is not related to choosing what to withhold but to choosing appropriate words in order not to be blunt or aggressive. The implication is that such moves do not take topics off the agenda but simply rephrase the way in which they are discussed. My own response ('ha ha ha ha, in a good way, I am not complaining about it') is one of slight embarrassment, seeking to repair any offence I might have caused through such a question, and points to my own taken-for-granted assumption that withholding might be considered as a negative activity.

In the same exit interview a few minutes later, he noted:

'I do try to be forceful but maybe in a polite way.'

There is here, then, the idea of being able to choose appropriately one's words to fit one's audience in order not to cause undue offence, but also in a way that does not dilute the delivery of the message: one can both speak up and get one's point across *and* be polite. Politeness does not require silence, just voice in a modified form.

Before moving on to the other two ways of choosing between silence and voice in situations of conflict, I divert a little to provide an example of Paul's approach, of how he talks about editing and word choice to address an issue that might otherwise be embarrassing, which comes from this same October meeting. In our discussion after that meeting, he replied to my question about his silence, not by referring to the argument about the posters but from another point in the meeting, when he and Nina had been reporting back from the Project Board meeting that had taken place that morning. When I had first asked him if he had 'edited out' anything after the meeting, he had said no (the quote at the beginning of this section). After a few minutes of chatting, when I asked again just to confirm if there had been anything that he had stayed silent about, he said that actually there had been something, during the agenda item when he had been reporting back from the Project Board meeting, about the frustration that had been expressed that no-one from City Council had turned up to the meeting:

'The view of the [Project Board] meeting, what people at the meeting said was that it was ridiculous that no-one from City was there. But when I reported this back, I didn't want to embarrass Alison, so I rephrased it so that it didn't seem like I was having a go at the City Council.'

His response, about seeking not to embarrass Alison is not unambiguously about withholding. (Maybe he had picked up on my earlier use of the term 'editing out' rather than 'staying silent' in our conversation.) It seems to be more about paying

attention to the language being used and how utterances are crafted, in order not to implicate Alison in the criticism being reported back by Project Board members about senior managers in the organisation to which she is affiliated.

This distinction and overlap of relating to Alison both as a person and as a representative of the City Council arose again during the exit interview with Paul:

C: I was interested in that relationship between County and City and why it might be a little bit kind of ... this is my *impression* and it might be wrong, but it it it was obviously something that needed attention, it seemed .. to keep that relationship ... looking good, is again not quite the right phrase

P: Looking as though we were working together

C: Yeah

P: a united front

C: Yeah yeah, there was a kind of like a relationship between the two councils that was different to the university and it was clear that you were on Alison's side if you like and again I'm putting words in your mouth but

P: Yeah yeah

C: I didn't know how you felt about that or if it was something that did .. you know .. that does ring true

P: Er... yeah ... and we've had a, had a lot of difficulties with them recently, City Council ... but not with *Alison* and Alison's our main contact and we can have proper open discussions with her and we've found that when things go further up or elsewhere, that's when we have difficulties, some of that is historic and I don't think, I don't think the City and County Council have got on well at all in the last 10, 15 years and I think .. this is probably the best relationship we've had recently

C: That's really interesting, so actually Alison as a *person* is actually quite important

P: Yes definitely

C: It wasn't so much her as the organisation or representative

P: Er a bit of both really, it's her as a personality but it's also her position in the organisation in that she is very practical, um, she's got day to day experience of this kind of work so that meant that someone like her could understand what your concerns were, understand the practicalities of it, you weren't talking to someone from corporate communications or er .. chief execs for example who didn't really grasp it but Alison on her own is, you know, nice and friendly and open

The historic and current relationship between their respective employing organisations is referred to in order to show Paul's need for paying attention to what he says in front of Alison. Because she is 'nice and friendly and open' and someone who they can have 'proper open discussions with' - in effect, someone who speaks the same language as him, who can understand the same concerns and practicalities - he does not want to load onto her the difficulties that are caused by communicating with chief executives or people in departments like corporate communications. The sensitivity about speaking up in this regard is constructed as deriving from being caught between his personal relationship with Alison, that they get on well together, and his professional role as a County Council project officer in relation to her position in the City Council.

Paul in this same exit interview, a while later, used the October argument to illustrate the relationship between being polite, letting things go and the importance of what needs to be discussed:

I'm prepared to let things go really, but I think there were things said at certain times by other people .. er Sean for example, in one of the meetings which, we all know what happened ha ha ... Yeah and all it seemed to be about a minor issue and it all changed the dynamic of the meeting, and I don't know if he thinks he shouldn't have said it but .. he perhaps felt he had to say it'

The unimportance that Paul placed on the issue being argued about, its 'minor issue' status, is compared to the potential importance that Sean might have felt - 'he perhaps felt he had to say it'⁵⁰ - as a possible explanation for why Sean had caused such an argument. Otherwise, if it is a minor issue, why speak up and create a fuss? A better implied course of action would have been to stay silent - in Paul's words, to 'let things go' - or to choose more appropriate words and be polite if it warranted discussion.

I now return to the construction of appropriateness about the type of speaking up that might embarrass. Both the next two accounts, from Sean and Alison, develop the ideas of when it may be necessary and appropriate to speak up in this way, and they both balance pragmatic features with interpersonal consequences.

8.4.3 Sean: speaking up on matters of importance

Due to a lack of availability prior to the October meeting, Sean and I had not yet managed to find a time to conduct an initial, more in-depth interview that I wanted to hold with all the project group participants, and so this was combined with the post-meeting conversation directly after this difficult meeting about the posters. When I asked him about the purpose of these project group meetings, he began his answer by referring to the wider council project that would be ongoing and how these meetings made sure that they work together effectively, that they were helping to learn each other's language.

Then he stopped and paused for a second, and asked rhetorically, 'Is there any other answer to this? I suppose it also allows the council's feathers to be ruffled and

⁵⁰ What the 'it' consists of is never explicitly stated.

smoothed. There have been some lively rows, but that's OK, I don't mind that. But these meetings are an appropriate way to discuss how things are going.'

'So is this a safe space to air your dirty laundry then?' I asked.

'Yes, so you could say the purpose of these meetings is to build a common understanding out of dirty laundry. The meetings have become a lot more informal, there's a lot of laughter now. The earlier meetings were not like that, and I think the reason for the change is that the council is much more trusting of the process, they are more relaxed, they've come to terms with the fact that they're not in control.'

This was a striking comment for me given the argument that had occurred in the meeting less than an hour beforehand.

He carried on by referring to his relationship with Nina, 'There's an interesting power thing going on. I've wrested control of the project from Nina, not to keep for myself but to hand it over to [the research team]. So I've become Nina's punchbag, if you like, I'm deflecting stuff away that she's throwing at us.'

Nina is singled out in this extract, and somehow made distinct from the 'the council' (now 'more trusting' at this point in the project), and from the 'they' who are more 'relaxed' and who have 'come to terms with the fact that they're not in control.' It is not clear who 'the council' is that he is referring to: perhaps Alison? Perhaps it also includes her line manager? Does it include Paul who, in a move that seemed out of character for him, had just stood up to Sean and argued against what he had been saying?

There are significant changes in the way Sean describes the purpose of these meetings over these few utterances: moving from working together effectively,

learning each others' language, ruffling and smoothing the councils' feathers, being an appropriate space for lively conversations, wresting control from Nina, and ending up as a space where he is 'deflecting stuff away' that she is throwing at them. It becomes unclear what is happening in the meetings, and whether they are all working together, or whether Sean is controlling what happens here in this space in order to facilitate the collaboration of his research team elsewhere. What Sean constructs for these meetings might be theorised as a particular, localised but actually quite ambiguous speech genre between the university research team and the council officers, where a particular pattern of interaction is allowed and expected, but one that has developed over time rather than being explicitly agreed, and that is not clearly identifiable to all parties. There is an ambiguity about what is going on that is perhaps useful to maintain, without attempts to tie meanings down too firmly.

It should be noted that the poster argument took place in the same meeting described in Section 7.4, when Nina had sought to be involved in the university's workshop. The discussion about the workshop was an early agenda item; the community talks agenda item was towards the end. Sean's utterances about how he was 'deflecting stuff away' that Nina was throwing at them was interpreted by me in relation to both these conversations. The significance I interpreted was that Nina not only was wanting to be involved in the university's work in a way that caused difficulties (bringing a council language into their work), but what she was doing separately and independently was also problematic for the university team (using the co-inquiry language in an inappropriate setting).

While he downplays the problematic nature of the argument in his comment about how he does not mind 'lively rows', there is some indication that he needed to account for the consequences produced for Kerry by the way in which Sean had

raised his objections. Because of his own difficult relationship with Nina, he explained, all communications between her and the university team were now going through Kerry but, he said, 'I should have seen those posters though. I feel bad about it, I put Kerry in an awkward position, but I'll speak to her afterwards.'

In his account, the relationship with Kerry, his subordinate in the university team, is constructed as one that needs some care; the relationship with Nina is one which does not. The act of speaking up and creating an awkward position for Kerry, rather than staying silent and not doing so, is here justified in terms of outcomes: he needed to rectify the problem of the posters and he had not had an opportunity to do this earlier. The requirement to speak up in this way is framed as part of his duty to deliver the research project.

When I then asked Sean if there was anything he withheld, he commented, 'I held back on how truly awful those posters were, they couldn't have been any worse'.

Even though other participants' interpretations of Sean were that he was extremely angry (and therefore that nothing was edited, as Paul comments in Section 8.4), Sean's account of his own silence describes his act of holding back about the real strength of his feeling. While it is easy for other project group members to pass judgment on what Sean *did* say, what he consciously does *not* say is of course not available for their comment. Such acts of withholding do not count towards the development of a favourable or otherwise interpretation of someone's character by other people.

Sean's construction of his holding back does not reflect Martin's suggestion of finding a more appropriate time and place in which to speak up. While it might be interpreted as exactly the type of tactic that Paul talks about - Sean as someone

attempting to be forceful but still polite by editing out certain words or phrases - Sean actually acknowledges that his behaviour has had some consequential embarrassment for Kerry, that he has in fact not acted in a polite way. If the situatedness of the utterance is explored a little further, it leads to a slightly different function for the withholding.

After the reference to the 'truly awful' nature of the poster, Sean noted that his inclination is often to temper his language:

'I'll say things like 'bit of a problem' when actually it's a huge problem. In the last meeting [the September meeting] for instance, I held back from saying that I thought people were talking about the wrong thing, they were talking about process rather than substantive content.'

The construction of silence here seems to have a function of showing the presence of self-control and lack of interference in relation to others with whom he is working. This strip of conversation takes place in the context of our discussion about how he has become Nina's punchbag in order to hand control to his research team. His discourse here is one of stepping back, noticing what is going on but preventing himself from making too much of a fuss about details and allowing others to direct what happens. He was, of course, the project sponsor in this instance who was employing other people to deliver the substantive work, and this positioning is drawn upon in his subsequent comment:

'None of the events have been like I would have designed them but that's part of the process of letting go.'

What the implication seems to be is that the exception to his 'letting go' is when there might be harm to the overall direction of the research project. When this is the case, Sean implies that he intervenes, as he has done in this situation with the poster.

When Sean first mentioned this withholding about the poster, I had wondered what he might have said if the posters had been designed really well. I asked him about this during the exit interview a few months later: whether he would have minded so much if the posters had simply been better designed. He replied:

'um if they'd been brilliantly designed I would still have had a problem because they were .. because there was um a structure and a rationale in place for what we were doing and this was would would .. this would be cladding the water really so um in a graphic design sense I had problems .. in the in the um I suppose the superficial branding layer but also in the more fundamental brand articulation of the project and the structure and the rationale that was being messed with and that so there were *superficial* concerns but there were also *fundamental* issues'

What Sean seems to be validating is Paul's point about the need to speak up about matters of importance. He is suggesting again here that this was *not* a minor issue but a significant matter of the research project's brand articulation, structure and rationale being 'messed with'. His speaking up about the posters is thus constructed as anything but trivial. It is his silence instead that can be construed as being about something trivial - that he thought the design was 'truly awful' - which he lets pass and does not make a fuss about.

8.4.4 Alison: being able to judge when to step back

There are some significant distinctions between the ways that Sean and Alison talk about the poster argument that highlight how not embarrassing someone might be offered as a socially constructed norm for staying silent, that requires some accounting for if transgressed. It may be noteworthy that while Sean was Kerry's line manager, and they did not yet know each other very well, Alison and Nina knew each other fairly well, and were peers at the same grade. In my conversation with

Alison after the meeting, I said that I had found the discussion about the posters really awkward, but was not sure if others had.

Alison replied:

'It *was* awkward but it wasn't a *big deal*, that's just Sean. I try not to say anything to undermine anyone or that would offend, I would prefer to talk to people outside the meeting instead. That whole poster thing was difficult but we were already talking about the subject so I continued.'

There are three ways in which the conversation of the argument is downplayed and for which she accounts for acting against the norm of not undermining or offending. Firstly, she states that while it was awkward, the discussion was not a big deal with a reference to 'just Sean', implying that one might expect such awkwardness in conversations with him given his personal track record. She then outlines her own preference - that *she* tries not to say anything that would undermine or offend, and would rather talk to people outside the meeting instead - the same tactic of deferral noted by Martin, above. Through indicating this preference, she makes a distinction between the kind of interaction that occurred in the meeting, which was initiated by Sean and the kind that she herself would normally engage in. That the subject had already been raised is used finally as the third rationale that allows Alison to speak up. Since the embarrassing situation had already been created, it was no longer her responsibility for having created it. Therefore, she defends herself against a positioning as someone who might breach the norm of not undermining or offending.

What seems to be action that had embarrassed Nina is then transformed within a frame of relationship-building in the next part of her account. After developing the distinction between her own and Sean's style of interaction, she moves to pragmatic

considerations, suggesting that she had been consciously building the relationship with Sean in a way that can be compared to her relationship with Nina:

'my strongest relationship is with Nina and with Sean .. and Nina and I have worked together a long .. well two or three years now .. and we've had our little run-ins and we do have them and you can see, we spar off each other but I very much respect what she does, she's very good at her job and we've learnt how to communicate to each other, so I've kind of learnt that and I know when to go, right OK, she's annoyed now, step back and it's kind of, it's really kind of, for me over time I feel that, when other people are looking, no it's fine, I know where she's coming from, I know whether to say something now [or] later .. and I think because we have got that relationship, so with Sean I was building that relationship'

In the same way as Nina and Martin positioned themselves as caught between two different people in the group, Alison does also. The shared history of working together provides a resource that Alison uses to position herself as socially capable and responsive, judging the point at which Nina will become annoyed, while at the same time pragmatically developing the working relationship with Sean. The length of time that she has known Nina and the depth of understanding between them provide the softening context of acceptability for what might otherwise appear to be an unacceptable instance of having embarrassed Nina in the meeting. It means they can 'spar off each other' successfully.

She continued:

'We often play good guy, bad guy, and have different styles. Some people won't take to my style, others won't to Nina's, it's just a person's way of working and is not a big deal. You probably noticed when Nina had to leave, I said to her on the way out "are you alright" and she had said yes.'

Alison, like Sean with Kerry, points to actions that were (or were to become) taken later in order to ensure that the possibly injured party is not in fact permanently

injured. The 'good guy, bad guy' positioning, with an underlying pragmatic sense of working to the most suitable personal style, suggests that this is a carefully crafted, utilitarian strategy that she has developed with Nina in their working relationship. Alison may be the (good or bad? it is not actually clear) guy in this case, but in another project where they might be working together, they may swap these roles depending on whose personal style is most useful in that situation.

The good guy, bad guy positioning is also used by Kerry during the exit interview when she was reflecting on moments when Sean's communicative style may have appeared too harsh. She also uses a storyline of pragmatic outcomes:

K: Me and Sean are good cop bad cop ... I I coach people and get things to happen and then if somebody isn't playing ball then *Sean* sends them a shirty email .. and that was just the way it worked with my *old* manager actually, I'm really good at getting people to work on a ...

C: Together

K: together and you know (blah di blah?) but now and again sometimes harsh things need to be said by a manager which is why I'll never be a senior manager .. far too nice

Kerry's construction uses the appropriateness of a managerial role to allow for 'harsh things' being said: a senior manager must not be too nice or else they may not be effective at getting people to play ball. Her communication, in contrast to Sean's, is 'far too nice'.

8.5 A retrospective construction of the risk of silence

The post-meeting conversations introduced another form of silence into the discussions: a retrospective identification of a lack of attention paid to, and therefore a lack of discussion about, the posters prior to the meeting's argument about them. Such silence might be compared to Kurzon's (2007) thematic silence, and yet the

thematic silence becomes implicated as withholding. There are two issues that emerge from the discussion: the first is the connection of silence to a pragmatic weighing up of priorities; the second is how a lack of overt discussion becomes defined as a more problematic, and accountable, form of silence only after something has gone wrong.

The first of these issues is most clearly described in Kerry's talk with me. When I talked to her for our post-meeting conversation two days after the meeting, she said, 'Oh God, I made an error of judgment. Nina had emailed the posters around but I didn't really pay them much attention [...] I felt awful because Nina was saying 'well I spoke to Kerry' and it made it sound like I had been hiding stuff from Sean. But it's OK now because I had my performance appraisal yesterday, Sean didn't mention anything but at the end, to clear the air, I raised it and explained what had happened. I thought he was mad at me in the meeting.'

One of the difficulties that Kerry constructs in this extract is how what Nina had said made it appear as if she was 'hiding stuff' from Sean. Her account is not about her own silence in the meeting itself: it is about the impression of being seen to be withholding, being seen possibly as a bad worker by her line manager, and as causing, through her 'error of judgment', potential difficulties in the delivery of the research work.

When I suggested to Kerry that she had been in a no-win situation in the argument about the posters - that she was either going to embarrass Sean or Nina: like others, she was caught between two of the group members - she thought for a second, then said that actually if she had printed the posters out to show Sean, she would probably have lost three days of her work with having to negotiate the copy between him and

Nina, and maybe subconsciously she had been wanting to avoid this. 'I didn't think that Sean would even see the posters,' she said.

This non-communication with Sean is justified through appeal to a pragmatic pursuit of outcomes. The logic she uses rests on the idea that one cannot notice and discuss every single matter, and therefore one must make some, perhaps subconscious but nevertheless rational, judgment about what is worth alerting her line manager to, what is important enough to warrant possibly losing three days of work time over. She rationalises this lack of attention to the minutiae of the posters, which seemed low risk since she thought Sean would not even see them.

An issue becoming identified only later as something warranting more discussion is also mentioned in the conversation with Paul. He said he felt guilty for not flagging up the issue of the branding before, and that he shared the responsibility with Nina. He had noticed the branding but had presumed that it had been agreed with Kerry since she was on the email circulation list. But, he said, it was down to him as much as to Nina.

'The poster just got fired through. It's just one of those things. But it sums up the difficulty of working with partners. I think the situation could have been handled better on all sides.'

His point suggests that chronology and consequence matters, and that there are inevitably discussions that never happen that can retrospectively be identified as issues not talked about, and which he evaluates as 'just one of those things' when working with partners, as occurring through no-one's fault in particular. He continued:

'Kerry does circulate a lot of information, but Sean didn't see it and Kerry doesn't have the say that Sean does. I think we made an effort to reach

consensus on publicity, but the thing is, how do we move forward when people have different views on things? Sean has very strong opinions and sometimes we don't get these early enough. I've been in this position before when managers miss certain things, they don't pick up on something and then complain about it later.'

The problem identified in Paul's discourse occurs when Sean got involved at a late stage and disagreed about the posters' details. His point raises the issue that it may be only when something has happened that is not to a manager's liking that employees have to account for their actions.

8.6 Summary of emergent themes

The idea of silence has been developed in this chapter primarily in connection to difficult moments in social interaction. Much of the content in participants' accounts in this chapter, as in Chapter 7, redirected my question away from a construction of silence as a conscious act of withholding and repositioned it as a phenomenon emergent from, and connected to, sensitivities within relationships and the management of these sensitivities. A particularly strong construction in this chapter was the formulation of silence in terms of difficulties arising from being caught between different individuals in the immediate situation. In the argument about the posters, Nina's discourse positioned her as caught between Sean and Kerry; and Martin's, Alison's and Kerry's discourse positioned each of them as caught in different ways between Sean and Nina. Speaking up in order to respond to the concerns of one person was positioned as causing difficulties for the other based on the distinct personal relationships involved.

While silence was suggested as an appropriate action to avoid embarrassing someone, nevertheless such a practice did not always solve the difficulty in the type

of situation presented here. Various tactics in managing such social dilemmas, in choosing whether to speak up or stay silent, were described: to temporarily withhold and defer a conversation elsewhere; to modify and choose carefully what words are used in order to make an utterance more acceptable; to drop an issue as relatively unimportant; and to make a judgement based on a personal knowledge of the other interlocutors about how far to pursue a conversation and at what point to step back from it. The tactics imply, as in the previous chapter, that silence and voice are not straightforward opposite actions to each other, but rather more complex and nuanced social phenomena. While Chapter 7 highlighted how a lack of speaking could be interpreted differently by different people, this chapter points out the ambiguities of meaning that might be contained within voiced utterances also. Such ambiguity was further illustrated in my discussion with Sean, as he talked about the underlying social dynamics and power relations in the meetings, and how a lack of clarity about the purpose of the meeting conversations brought the possibility of seeing them as serving different functions, with one of these functions being the successful development of the slightly different university research work elsewhere.

The anticipatory nature of communication was reflected in this chapter, as participants positioned themselves as being caught between the immediate conversation and dialogues with other characters outside the project group. In this sense, an immediate choice of silence or voice in a project group meeting was discursively presented as one to be judged and determined within a wider network of obligations and interests. Nina depicted herself as caught between this initial stage of the project and what she hinted was a more crucial dialogue with the City council about the longer-term project delivery. While she constructed her own practice of silence again in relation to the difficult interpersonal relationship with Sean as a

particular ('peculiar') character with whom it was futile to engage, the more important relationship that was depicted was the more enduring one with Alison and the City Council, rather than the temporary one with Sean. The difficulty of her own practice of silence seemed to relate not so much to the lack of influence with Sean but to the ineffectiveness of the dialogue elsewhere with City councillors and senior staff. Likewise, Sean's depiction of his own involvement in the project group meeting conversations can be conceptualised as imbued with the voices of the other (absent) university research staff as he spoke up, and risked embarrassing Kerry, on a matter that he constructed as important for the research project's success.

The issue of relative priorities in the evaluation of staying silent rather than speaking up was featured in other participants' accounts, in which silence was constructed as not just reasonable but advisable on some topics in order to focus on tasks that were most important to accomplish. The final section of this chapter pointed out the changing nature of this prioritisation over time, with an example of how a thematic silence, in which there was not necessarily an individual agentic action of withholding but rather a lack of discussion in the social interaction, became identified and evaluated in hindsight as an absence that needed accounting for.

The next and final data chapter discusses participants' discourse about silence in relation to an agenda item on the transfer of the co-inquiry work from the university team to the councils. The issue of how the two pieces of work fit together became more important, as the end stage of the project work approached.

9 THE TRANSFER OF PROJECT WORK TO THE COUNCIL

This chapter introduces the last agenda item in the thesis: the handover of work from the university research team to the council project team. The chapter includes data taken from the discussion in the December meeting about how to join up this first stage of work, delivered predominantly by the university team, with the councils' ongoing project. This December meeting turned out to be the last meeting of the group. Another meeting had been planned for January, as a final opportunity to bring the participants back together, to wrap up the project after the university team's report had been submitted, and to bring this first stage to a close. However, the January date ended up being cancelled just before the meeting was due, since Sean could no longer attend and no alternative date could be found that suited everyone. The accounts of silence offered in the chapter are taken both from the December post-meeting conversations and the final exit interviews a few weeks later: these show a variety of orientations towards the project group, and a variety of individual preoccupations for what was to come next at this project end stage.

The discussion about silence is developed in a number of ways. Firstly, it is connected to the appropriate performance of roles at this stage of the project lifecycle, with Sean and Kerry now stepping back from active engagement in the detail and the council officers taking over instead. I illustrate how at this point in the project, new patterns of voice and silence emerge, with certain topics becoming acceptable to introduce (and re-introduce) into the conversation, and new time-related and role-specific rationales for silence being offered. Secondly, the practice of silence is also given a temporal dimension in relation to issues of uncertainty,

until a point at which an issue has been more fully worked out and/or authorised through appropriate organisational procedures.

By this stage, the project work that had been done so far was already producing some consequence, both positive and negative, for the different participants, and their past practices of silence could therefore start to be evaluated as successful or otherwise.

The chapter provides two contrasting examples of how council officers' silence is constructed as a positive phenomenon in the face of the heteroglossic encounter with the university's different ways of working: both at the micro-level of generating new forms of 'inner discourse' (Larrain and Haye, 2012a) when encountering other ways of thinking; and across a wider temporal and spatial scale, where the newly learnt professional language of co-inquiry can be harnessed for ventriloquised (Cooren and Sandler, 2014) lobbying and influencing through the mouths of other people. There is therefore a theme of instrumentality that runs through the chapter. I discuss the issue of the target (Gruman and Saks, 2014), or addressee, in communicative interaction - who needs to be engaged with, who is constructed as irrelevant - and illustrate that it is not always the people directly in conversation who are being addressed in acts either of voice or silence. The issue of hidden agendas is also addressed, which Kerry identifies as a topic that is difficult to discuss. I provide an example of this particular difficulty, of attempting to talk about issues of control in this ostensibly collaborative project based on principles of co-inquiry.

To end the chapter and the overall presentation of empirical data, I discuss an episode in which an act of withholding is contrasted to acoustic silence to show the implication of the distinction between these.

9.1 Moving to the end of the project stage: different patterns of voice

Right from the start of the project, there had been a clear anticipation that the outputs of the university's co-inquiry work would transfer over to the councils for use in the long-term delivery of the greenspace site enhancement. After the final co-inquiry event was delivered, this transfer of work moved from being an abstract concept to a more concrete matter, being placed as an agenda item for discussion in the project group meeting. Although there was a specific agenda item on the transfer of project work, there was a moment a littler earlier in the meeting, as the group was discussing and evaluating the last co-inquiry event, when this issue of transfer also became pertinent. It was a noteworthy moment because it re-introduced a topic that had been off-limits for the past few months. This is an extract from the transcript as Nina is explaining that the three council officers had just been discussing their ideas at a recent joint meeting with the two councils' communication officers:

Nina: We talked about and and I I think that'll come back obviously to what we'll get out of the Co-De process

Sean: Yeah

Nina: and how we structure the next phase in terms of, you know, being true to the outcomes and the values, you know, the meaningful engagement, how we can work with that but er taking ideas and so testing ideas and bringing in that level of you know *constraints* ((laughing)) hahaa, now am I allowed to ((laughter))

Sean: Yeah

Nina: use the word ((Alison laughs))

Nina's reference to 'constraints' was met by laughter from the other participants as they acknowledged the significance of the word that had caused difficulty during the early days at the project beginning, and which had not been talked about in these

meetings since then. Sean's response in this sequence finally granted the council officers permission to bring back their issue of constraints for discussion.

It is worth noting that the move to the end stage of the project affected my conversation too. I was aware that my research would be finishing soon, and so in the conversations after the meeting I asked more specific questions about my interpretations of possible acts of withholding that I thought might have happened in order to try and discuss more precisely the phenomenon. I had become aware that, looking back on my fieldnotes to date, I had been perhaps too polite in these post-meeting conversations, too nervous to ask what seemed to be awkward questions, and too reticent about taking up participants' pressed time with follow-on questions. In both these instances above, what appears possible and socially sensible to discuss seems to be related to conditions connected to the project's stage of delivery. While in the first example, the council officers might have met with some resistance if they had raised the issue of constraints again prior to this point, in my example it was not so much that I would *not* have been able to act as I did, but that I had not thought to do so. My attention was now directed slightly differently to the task in hand. My sense of the December meeting, similarly, was that it had a different feel than previous meetings in the way in which it was conducted, with the council officers taking far more of a proactive role. This is illustrated over the next few sections.

9.2 The discussion in the meeting about the transfer of work

Prior to the December meeting of the group, Paul and Nina had already worked up some initial ideas and a short paper of recommendations about a process to incorporate the work done up until this point into the ongoing work of the two councils. These ideas were in draft form at the time of this project group meeting,

still awaiting submission to senior council managers for discussion, approval and confirmation of resource commitments. When the group reached the agenda item to discuss the process of transfer of work, Paul started to explain what they would be proposing to their Project Board.

Paul: Well we er started thinking a bit more about the design process now and how we translate the ideas that come out of Co-De into a plan and we felt I think that it was a big jump just to go from all the ideas to a concept plan, here you go [...] so in the process of bringing together a design team we're getting people to .. rather than prepare a brief for them, just to look at this moment at the .. what are the obvious constraints and opportunities on this site, what are the opportunities that will have come through your process

Paul's description includes the problem they are facing: how to join Co-De's process of looking creatively at the opportunities with their own processes of looking at the constraints, and to do this in a way that does not make too great a leap from one to the other:

Paul: But we need to now start to introduce some of the practical constraints so it makes sense to people there, it's not just taking a massive step forward and *design this*, it's kind of incremental .. right, we had the ideas from Co-De, now we're going to introduce a bit of realism if you want, practicality, but we're also going to show this is what your ideas *might* look like, or *do* look like on other sites

Kerry: Yeah

Paul: so that's the next stage really

Nina and Paul suggested holding some 'mood board' workshops - around what Nina had called particular 'design areas' - with some of the relevant technical specialists from both councils and invited members of the public. These workshops could introduce the university team's report to the council specialists, and would be the means for thinking through how the general public's feedback contained in the report

could work alongside any legal or planning constraints or other operational considerations.

Their suggestion led to a debate about whether the council officers and subject specialists would be out of their depth in leading such a process. The debate was triggered by Sean querying what he had heard as a distinction between a technical site analysis and a mood board. He suggested that the latter, while sounding positive, may actually be more problematic as a means to convey the university's co-inquiry outputs to a designer, to produce a final site design, since the council staff would not be used to managing such processes. Sean illustrated his concern by role-playing the local authority technical specialists' involvement to show the possible difficulties of asking them to respond creatively in the production of a mood board. A few seconds later, his final point on the matter was:

Sean: But after having said that, this is your process.

9.3 Silence when it is no longer your role to speak up

When I talked to them after the meeting, both Sean and Kerry talked about how it was now the councils' process to take the project work forward, and how this had affected their own involvement in the conversation.

In my conversation with Kerry, I suggested that the meeting had had a different feel, like the handover had started.

She agreed, 'Yeah it definitely did feel different, like in the past few meetings I've chaired it, it wasn't designed that way, but that's just how it turned out. But this time I didn't do that. Quite rightly. It did feel like they're taking it on now, they're picking up the baton.'

When I asked her if there was anything she had kept silent about, she looked into the middle distance for a couple of seconds and then said, 'No, not really, there isn't.'

Kerry noted that there was nothing she had withheld. However, in the meeting I had sensed a hesitation from her during the point when the group was talking about the process for taking the work forward, that she might have had something more to contribute. Paul had been discussing their thinking about how to move forward, and Kerry had offered a specific term that I had not understood. This is the extract from the transcript:

Paul: so I think there's a step required in between about, what Nina said earlier, about visualisation, this is what you *could* have, or these are what *these* ideas mean, and this is an example [of that

Kerry: [Proof of concepts

Paul: it might look like this, yeah

I asked Kerry, 'There was one moment that I was wondering about, if you were wanting to contribute more. You know when they were talking about how to take the ideas forward and you mentioned a phrase that I didn't quite catch, something about proof of concepts?'

She said, 'Yes that's right, it was from when I was at uni, there was a pot of money that you could apply for to test out concepts, so it wasn't about final ideas, it was more about what was going to work and how could things be combined.'

'It felt to me like you had experience of that and I was wondering if you had wanted to say more at that point, like there might have been a role for you that never came out.'

She replied, 'Um I guess I defer to Sean quite often. But he's really good at talking and he usually gets it spot on, he's usually right. So...' she thought for a moment, 'would my ideas have been any different? I don't think they would have. Also it looks like the council have come up with some good ideas, there's something positive there, and I think what Sean was suggesting was right, so there wasn't really anything more for me to add.'

'So would you say that you left it to those who had more experience, or who were professional in something, to do the talking?'

'Well, I think Sean said it at the meeting actually, it's like their baby now. We can advise but it's theirs now, so we really don't have a say any more.'

Earlier in the project, my conversations with Kerry had included the idea of staying silent while one learns the job, until one is experienced enough to contribute fully. Now, however, she does not connect her talk about silence to inexperience. Instead, her talk refers firstly to the appropriateness of disengaging at this stage, and secondly to the fact that Sean, as someone who is 'really good at talking and usually gets it spot on', has already said anything that she might have been able to say herself. She is a member of the university team and, she proposes, there is no longer any need for her to think about what to say and what to withhold, since the responsibility for action now lies with the councils.

The theme of disengaging from this stage of the process is also picked up in the post-meeting conversation I had with Sean. I asked whether he had got to say everything that he had wanted to say.

He answered, 'I think there's a danger that the co-inquiry idea will be ignored, or perhaps worse will be used in a way that asks people who are unskilled in being creative to respond in a designerly way. I think Nina is pushing too hard, she's trying to rush things, whereas Alison understood and was getting it more.'

His answer to my question is indirect and refers to concerns, that had been unexpressed in the meeting, about what might happen in the future: that the co-inquiry idea might be ignored or used badly by people 'unskilled in being creative', that the council officers might go about it the wrong way.

I continued, 'It felt to me like it was a good meeting but it had quite a different tone, that you and Kerry had sat back more and the council officers had done more of the talking. I wondered if that had affected what you said?'

He said, 'Yes, I might have offered to run the workshops if we were at a different time but we deliberately did not do that. I'm not going to volunteer work that I could do because this is now their process to run. Kerry and I had a pre-meeting before this and agreed we didn't want to be involved after the handover, we agreed that we were going to pull back now. It's hard to do though because it feels like pushing the bird out of the nest and you just have to hope that the councils have enough support.'

The specific withholding that Sean identifies - of not offering to run the workshops - becomes relevant in relation to the meeting's discussion about how to take the process forward. It is a withholding that he notes was already pre-determined in some sense by an agreement before the meeting with Kerry in which the two of them had decided that they would not seek to be involved after the handover period. The appropriateness of the withholding and his timely disengagement is nevertheless contrasted with it feeling somewhat uncomfortable, underpinned by his personal

concern for the project, that it 'feels like pushing the bird out of the nest', and hoping that the 'councils have enough support'.

The issue of how the councils take the work forward also arose in Sean's exit interview:

C: OK ... erm .. was there anything that *should* have been or could have been discussed earlier that would have improved the project

S: Maybe the erm .. what happened beyond our, the kind of legacy or impact erm .. yeah that side of things wasn't really discussed

C: and is that something only with *hindsight*, that wasn't something that you were thinking sitting there in the meetings and going oh I'm not sure we've thought about this enough but it's only the kind of

[retrospective

S: [It is with hindsight I think yeah .. and to be fair we couldn't say definitely what the outcomes were going to be so it was

[difficult

C: [yeah difficult

S: but I think if we were going to do the project again we would have some structures in place that would

He constructs the topic of legacy and impact as becoming relevant only in hindsight as something that should have been discussed earlier in the project: a thematic silence similar to Section 8.5. The missing topic becomes framed as a lesson learnt that might be applied if he were going to do similar work again, with an underlying emphasis on the pragmatic pursuit of improving project outcomes and being able to report back on legacy and impact. There are traces of a dialogue with the project's funder.

The research funding body is a voice that recurs in Sean's discourse,⁵¹ as illustrated in a conversation a few weeks earlier when the design team and volunteers had been preparing for the final co-inquiry event. Sean had arrived at the venue slightly later than the rest of us, after having facilitated an inter-departmental collaborative workshop at the university. When I asked jokingly if all the departments had tried to compete against each other, he replied, 'No, our research centre is completely out of that, we bring in so much more [funding] that it's not even worth mentioning. It's like gnats, you can let them feel important because you know they're gnats.'

People had laughed and I had taken the comment not too seriously. However, his throwaway line constructs as an understandable norm the ability to stay silent in front of those who are unimportant, and that, in university research circles, research funders are key stakeholders for whom it is fitting to generate the right impression.

9.4 Staying silent before matters are properly worked out

The conversation with Paul after this meeting, like with other participants, felt quite different from previous conversations with him. Previously his talk had often focused on the requirements and frustrations of waiting and not being involved in the project. Now the conversation was reminiscent of my earlier conversations with Kerry in which she was struggling to work out how to solve particular issues and achieve certain outcomes (see for instance pages 165 and 167). Paul's talk now was more about logistics and operational matters.

In our conversation after the meeting, when I asked Paul if there was anything he could recall not saying, he noted a moment during the discussion about the handover

⁵¹ I come back to this point again in Section 9.8.

process: 'We had to think carefully about the design stuff since we hadn't agreed the approach yet.'

As on previous occasions,⁵² his response about his silence alludes to paying attention to how utterances are expressed, and seems to refer to an incident in the meeting when there was a particular sensitivity about the talk. The sensitivity here in Paul's case seems to be the care needed when discussing information that is not yet authorised and that might change. He and Nina were reporting on matters that still needed to be discussed and decided between the Project Board and other managers from County and City Councils. Paul in the project group meeting was representing the interface between these entities at a moment when the discussions had not yet happened; he was talking in front of the university team and Alison, who were not part of that decision-making group. The risk, as I interpreted it, was of setting proverbial hares running by constructing some future scenario that may not occur or be possible to achieve. Such a situation had been noted by Kerry on a different occasion, when the university team had promised at the launch of the project to deliver a certain range of outputs that then turned out not to be feasible due to resource constraints. She said:

'We stood up in public, I was *mortified* at this, and it was like, shit we haven't got the money, and we went back to council and said we're going to have to scope this down'

Kerry emphasised the feeling of mortification as the university team had to renege on what they had promised. The implied difficulty seems to be the public nature of a promise of future activity.⁵³

⁵² See Section 8.4.

⁵³ Austin (1975/1962) writes on the peculiar nature of a promise as a speech act.

Paul's subsequent talk expanded on the difficulty: 'In hindsight, we maybe shouldn't have brought that sheet⁵⁴ to the meeting because we hadn't properly thrashed out ourselves how to do it.'

'You mean, you maybe shouldn't have discussed that bit on the agenda at all?' I asked.

'No, no, we were always going to discuss what next but maybe we shouldn't have brought that document to the meeting. It was just a last minute decision really, and we hadn't even talked about it with anyone yet, so it probably wasn't helpful to bring it.'

The hard copy document as material evidence, the 'last minute' nature of the decision, and the lack of prior discussion are all highlighted as difficult factors. Not only had matters not yet been agreed with senior managers, but the council officers had not yet even 'properly thrashed out' themselves what they wanted to propose. The discourse suggests that staying silent is appropriate until a matter is properly deliberated and thought out: one of the implicit voice theories identified by Detert and Edmondson (2010), and a key matter in issue-selling (Dutton and Ashford, 1993). Raising the matter in order to think through the implications and develop solutions within productive dialogic exchange is not the option constructed here in Paul's talk. Indeed, his approach reflects the same interactional patterning that Sean had established earlier in the project: such matters are not for deliberation with the other side of the project group.

⁵⁴ The sheet he refers to included a list of names of specialist staff in both councils who might be involved in the future project work.

Kerry and Sean as potential interlocutors for the topic were further dismissed in his following talk: 'So far Nina and I have brought everything together and we want to get the rest of the team involved. I think that's really important. And Nina is of the mind that we should get the community involved too at every stage. But what I think is that there's a problem of resources, it's how do we balance that against moving forward with the work. It would be great to have two days to plan out a consultation, but all we get is right, let's grab some stuff and go and stick some posters on the wall and there you go, that's your consultation.'

He and Nina were now grappling with the fine details of taking on the project from the university team in a way that would appear coherent to the Project Board and to the wider general public, and in circumstances where they just did not have the same luxury of resource that the university team had had. Thus the university team were no longer relevant in these discussions. Conversations and discussions did need to happen but not necessarily with those people in that project group meeting.

9.5 One person's silence in dialogue with another's voice

Alison's narrative about the end point of the project, the transfer of the work, and the loss of regular engagement with the university team, is somewhat different to Paul's. It also shows a different way to construct the notion of silence, where the dialogic interaction with other people's contributions in the meeting is central to the production and conscious noticing of 'inner discourse' (Larrain and Haye, 2012a).

My post-meeting conversation with her started with a discussion about the imminent end of the project, which seemed to influence our subsequent conversation about silence. When I asked Alison my usual introductory question - 'How did the meeting go for you?' - she answered, 'Yeah, it went well. It was strange actually because I

suddenly realised it was coming to an end, it just dawned on me, that's *it* then [...] If we haven't got meetings with Sean now, we need to think how we're going to do this. I mean, I work a lot with Nina and I get on with her, but she wants everything pinned down in place and sorted. It will be hard for us. I think we need someone to guide us on the processes really, not on the outcome, but making sure in the meantime. Obviously Sean comes from a design background, but what we try to do in council is try to rule out any uncertainties, as many as possible and then we can make it cheaper to do.'

I asked, 'Did you stay silent about any issues?'

'Well I'm glad Sean challenged, that was really good. I sensed that Nina found it hard. It put things in my mind about what I need to remember later. It opened my eyes up, and I'm thinking maybe we need a slower handover, we need to do it more slowly. We haven't been trained in this, and we need training.'

The idea of learning and finding out how to do co-inquiry for themselves was, of course, one of the ongoing issues that had been associated with Nina and what was deemed to be her unhelpful interference over the lifecycle of this project.⁵⁵

However, this is not a connection that Alison makes here.

'That's interesting. Was that something you were thinking in the meeting or did it occur to you afterwards?'

'It was afterwards, yeah. We should be thinking how we do this. I noticed Nina was struggling. She's already got in her head about how to do the next stage. She's got it

⁵⁵ See for instance how Alison describes Nina in Section 6.3.1, and Nina's allusion to learning in her suggestion that a council representative attend the workshop in Chapter 7.

set. How to phrase things was quite difficult because of that, I wanted to keep the discussion open, and that felt a bit difficult, keeping the discussion open.'

Alison constructs her silence not as a conscious act that took place in the meeting, but as emerging from a subsequent thought process of inner discourse which had been instigated by Sean's challenge in the meeting. She notes, like Paul in the previous section, a certain moment of sensitivity in the meeting, when she noticed that Nina was 'struggling'.

I raised this incident again in the exit interview with her, to ask about what she had said and the distinctions she was making between different people and their ability to raise certain topics.

C: I think you said you were glad that Sean had challenged on that and made you sit back and think about that a bit more and I was wondering why it was easier .. for *Sean* to do it .. because it sounded like you didn't *want* to do it

A: No it was because ... erm well I don't know .. there are two things there, it could have been because um .. I wasn't sure who should be invited and stuff ... but normally what happened was because I didn't have ...almost Sean played the devil's advocate .. challenging our views ... and I think I would have just gone with Nina and gone yeah that's the traditional way we've done it .. yeah go on, that's fine and on numerous times Sean's gone well that's not really co-inquiry, are you sure we want to go down that route ... and that's worked, and I think that's what we're going to struggle with, not having that, at the moment because it's a different way of thinking

While she and Nina share similar work backgrounds, and previously she has 'just gone with Nina', now in this extract, Alison constructs herself as being encouraged to think in a different way by Sean, who brings different expertise and new perspectives to the work. Nina's similarity now is less valued than Sean's difference. She noted:

'So Sean's quite quiet in meetings sometimes, and then he just comes out with certain things and you know from what people say, you know that he was listening to it, and he was, he *did* know what he was saying, and it was thought through, and it might have been contradictory to what *I* was saying but sometimes I heard what he was saying and went oh yeah that makes sense, OK.'

Sean's talk is described here as enabling a dialogic and interanimating thought process that otherwise Alison would not have encountered. A recognition of her own silence in this respect is generated by the encounter with this different way of thinking: alternative options for action have been triggered that she has thought about since. Moreover, the effectiveness of Sean's contributions are connected in her discourse to him being usually 'quite quiet in meetings'. Sean talks when he is knowledgeable; when he talks therefore, he is worth paying attention to.

9.6 Silence and power: appropriating others' voices for influence

A different type of silence in relation to the speaking up of others is identified in my discussion with Nina after this meeting. When I talked to her after the December meeting, I asked if she had said everything she had wanted to say or whether she had kept silent about anything.

She answered, 'Well, we needed to think how to acknowledge all the work, but really there's no point in raking over everything, we had to talk about how to acknowledge all the inputs because they have worked really hard. We are on the way out now with Co-De, it's about tying up loose ends and things now'.

Her response that there is 'no point in raking over everything' might be interpreted in this instance as referring not to a silence based on the futility of speaking up, as she has invoked after other meetings, but to an instrumentality of not needing to do so. It is not that she cannot find a way to be heard, but that she no longer needs to be.

The collaboration with the university team is coming to an end, and all that is needed now is some recognition of the university team's hard work and some administrative tying up of 'loose ends'.

She continued, 'This may be awful to say but it has been a useful process, that to be there with the [*Manor House owners*] was really good. I don't want to sound elitist and intellectual but that was good'.

She constructs the main benefit from the project as being the positive interaction with the Manor House owners. Over the previous few weeks before this conversation, Sean and Kerry had reported a number of productive discussions that they had had with the Manor House owners and their representatives. Apparently, the innovative co-inquiry events had made a positive impression with them. Useful personal connections had been established and doorways had been opened to future discussions about the council's greenspace site work.

I sought to clarify with Nina what the benefit was exactly, 'You mean, it was useful to be able to schmooze and position the project with the Manor House?'

'Yes exactly. But the problem is, where does that leave us now? It's a complicated site, it's very difficult. Sean kept us out of it, he didn't want to know anything from us, like he doesn't try to understand. I don't think it's been great for inclusivity but we will get other things out of it. But if we were attacked, we would be vulnerable.'⁵⁶

Sean's lack of understanding about the councils' concerns is again constructed to show the difficulties that have been left for the council officers to address. However,

⁵⁶ It is at this point that the conversational data presented in Chapter 6 continues, with Nina reconstructing for me what might have been the difficulties in the project.

although 'inclusivity' may not be one of them, there are 'other things' that are coming out of this project. One of these 'other things' may have been a means by which Nina could more effectively get things done. I start the elaboration of this line of thinking with data recalled from the first post-meeting conversation I had held with Nina. It is the same discussion mentioned previously in Section 8.3.1, in which she described herself as a 'grassroots activist' and that it was 'better to be on the inside rather than on the outside'. This early meeting had been brought to mind now, in this December conversation, by her 'elitist and intellectual' evaluation that it was good to be there with the Manor House, which I interpreted as being offered rather apologetically. When I asked her in this early conversation whether she had stayed silent about anything, she asked me to explain a bit more what I was after. I tried to explain by giving an example of my own behaviour.

I said, 'Like I didn't raise the question of whether an equality impact assessment was needed, or if one had been done, when you were talking in the meeting about the age characteristics of the people who had participated in the co-inquiry event. I didn't say anything because I wasn't really part of the project group and also I wasn't sure if it was useful to mention that at this stage.'

She replied, 'I guess not everyone would think like that, to consider if something was useful or not. I've had the experience of other people not wanting to say something so I've said it instead. There was an example just this morning in a [residents] meeting where I said something like 'this person had an interesting thought about that', to get them to talk *themselves* about it. I don't have any problem with speaking up but I don't talk sometimes if I feel I've said too much already.'

She constructs her own speaking up here as a means to generate the inclusion of others, and her not-talking as a space subsequently for others to step into with their own ideas and thoughts. She describes essentially a facilitator relationship, a role that corresponds well to the university's language of co-inquiry, in which Sean had suggested that experts needed to stand back so that members of the public could be equally involved (see Chapter 7). Her last utterance notes a sensitivity to the relative amount of time taken up by speakers, similar to that noted by Alison earlier in the chapter, where she noted the effectiveness of Sean's infrequent interventions.

There is a slight tension between two positions she notes: on the one hand, the neutral facilitator who encourages inputs from and on behalf of others, and on the other hand, the individual agent with her own views and opinions to contribute. I was noticing a similar positioning in other meetings and in her appropriation of the university team's language of co-inquiry in conversations with external stakeholders, as well as in internal council meetings. For instance, in her opening introduction at the community talks,⁵⁷ she pointed to the university's involvement in the project as evidence for the general public audience that the councils were now working in a different way. Similarly, at a meeting of the three council officers together, Nina reported that residents around the Manor House site had teamed up with the local civic society to form a pro-development lobby group, and that this group was planning to organise a conference to argue for a more coherent vision across the whole city. She said:

I think this is really useful for us, they could invite us and the [*Manor House owners*] and everyone and ask to know what's going on. I've explained there's no point in putting pressure on the council, it's just not possible to do

⁵⁷ These talks are the substantive focus in Chapter 7.

any more than we are doing, but let's see how we can do things in a different way.'

The identity of 'us' in her utterance above is ambiguous: I interpret it as the three council officers involved in this project, as they seek to work out how to make the case to their local authority senior managers to deliver this project in a different way than they might usually do. Nina's appropriation of the university's co-inquiry language can be used for advocacy *on behalf of* the two councils in relation to other stakeholders; it can also be seen as lobbying *within* the councils to do things differently. If Nina is wanting (or needing)⁵⁸ to encourage the City Council to embrace a more open and inclusive approach to engaging the public in their policy-making, then such messages to City Council managers are taken up much more effectively if they are spoken, in the university's language, by members of the general public rather than being spoken directly in her own voice as a County Council officer. The power of the message comes from Nina *not* being the one expressing it: it can be packaged as the local community who is lobbying, on the back of the QtM project, to whom they, as council, are now responding. Her development of residents' groups and the more advocacy-focused Friends group is starting to pay off, as similar messages to the university team's slogan of 'doing things differently' are being received by the City Council representatives (and others) from various sources. While the centripetal force of the university's language within the project meetings might have prevented her from successfully achieving what she might have wanted to within the project group, the centrifugal forces in language can also undermine other authoritative discourses elsewhere, in other meetings and conversations.

⁵⁸ It is never clear if this is a County council requirement or a personal wish of Nina's, and I remain neutral on this point. See the discussion about motives in Chapter 11.

9.7 Not talking about hidden agendas

The December meeting became the last space in which all the participants met together as a project group. I held final individual exit interviews a few weeks later with everyone, after the university's report had been handed over and the project had formally come to an end. The sense of some coherent group structure was already largely absent from people's talk, with participants already absorbed into new areas of work and new preoccupations. The exit interview conversations tended to have a reflective and historical tone. One of the questions I asked in these interviews was whether in hindsight there were topics that should have been talked about. There is one theme that emerged in these final interviews that had not been talked about earlier: the silence of not having talked enough about interpersonal conflict. I outline below these conversations, starting with Nina's:

C: Were there things you didn't talk about that maybe should have been talked about at some point ... along the way

((3s pause. N sighs. 2s pause))

N: I think there has been a certain lack of honesty which .. had we managed to have a better working relationship, more honest, we would have learnt a lot more from the process

C: Right

N: I think there came a point in the process where we probably all stopped to, to engage hhaa well, let's just run it, you know

C: Just get on with it

N: Let it run its course, everyone do their thing .. and ... er ... that's a *shame* ... there was a lot more that could be .. you know, that we could have explored and talked about afterwards, you know, but I think no-one was really keen to do it ha, I think there should have been more talking and more um ... exploration of differences... and and er maybe

there wasn't enough and that was why it was a bit .. ruptuous when it happened hhhaa ha ha⁵⁹

The exploration of differences that 'no-one was keen to do' might be picked up also in Sean's answer to the same question:

- S: so I think maybe if we were in our meetings reflecting, maybe this is something that we didn't .. talk about that we could have ... reflecting on *our* processes and ..
- C: 'our' being?
- S: the people in the room
- C: OK, got you
- S: and .. maybe getting Nina to talk about why she's ... feeling this need to constantly be pushing things forward and that might have reduced the friction a little bit

The discourse suggests a perspective that one *should* talk about such things as working relationships and that, by doing so, one can reduce the 'friction' in Sean's words, and the 'ruptuous' nature of the engagement in Nina's. All the participants noted that conflict and disagreement are legitimate under certain conditions. There are two areas that were identified in this regard. Firstly, task-based conflict based on an open exchange of views and exploration of divergent viewpoints was conceptualised as productive and useful. Alison noted:

'Conflict is positive because you get better results if you're questioned and you're not following everybody so I think .. to me .. conflict is not necessarily a bad thing'

although she then added a caveat:

as long as you've got good quality people there who really want to achieve, it will work its way out'

⁵⁹ The data continues directly at this point into the text described in Chapter 6 where Nina talks about how 'you just throw in what you wanted to say and gloss over it'.

The second area where conflict was seen as positive is to clear the air: talk here takes on a function similar to therapeutic healing. There is a strong sense in people's discourse that one should explore interpersonal conflict where it exists, as Nina and Sean's exit interview comments, above, suggest. Participants talked about how it was good to have that conflict at the beginning of the project because it allowed the issues to be properly investigated (see Chapter 6). However, while they noted that the conflict in the beginning did serve as an opportunity for a more open and candid discussion, to clarify how the project was to be organised, there were some doubts expressed about the extent of the openness of the discussion both in those early days and subsequently. Kerry commented in her exit interview:

K: the hardest bit I guess was that people often have hidden agendas and motivations and things so with like the email thing, that was *really* horrible, loads of really sniffy emails and power-playing and ... we did have a bit of a summit meeting about it, but I *still* didn't think the issues were actually aired properly

C: Right

K: I still didn't think the issues were, actually

C: Right, so people actually weren't putting their cards on the table

K: No, I don't think they were

C: And was there a reason, why it .. was it clear *why* things weren't talked about, and why ... hidden agendas were kept hidden, I mean ... do you have a theory about that

K: Again I think it was about people wanting to keep control so you can't really say to somebody you just want control, you can't let go

C: Ha ha ha, it's a difficult thing

[to say isn't it

K: [you can't say that and I think a *lot* of those meetings were a power struggle

Kerry's doubts reflect the difference between Argyris' (1990) notion of espoused theories - where people say they want to reflect upon, and be open about, their practices - and of theories-in-use - where people's actions show a very different orientation, without such reflection and openness. While some issues are talked about and resolved, Argyris suggests, other more fundamental issues are left undiscussed. The differences of opinion and the interpersonal tensions between Nina and Sean, which to some extent had been discussed at the beginning of the project, become more openly acknowledged by each of them at the end of the project. However, in neither of the two extracts above do Nina or Sean suggest any personal responsibility for not having raised the issue. It is not framed as something that they withheld but as something now noticed from this reflective positioning in hindsight: Nina and Sean can make these comments now without feeling that they need to engage in such talk, since the working relationship is now in the past. There is a discourse of *personal* regret but also of *collective* failure, that no-one identified the issue, rather than an individual accountability for not doing so. These espoused theories are therefore never tested.

Kerry suggested in her exit interview that 'you can't really say to somebody you just want control, you can't let go'. I had an opportunity to test a version of this statement during the exit interview with Sean. The next section discusses this interaction and the positioning taken up in relation to control and silence in this co-inquiry project, which lent some support to the difficulty of testing the espoused theory of 'not wanting control' in this project.

9.8 Silence and power-holding: participating versus chairing

For all the exit interviews, I had noted ahead of time questions that I wanted to ask the individual participants. In the interview with Sean, I had noted a question about the extent to which he was wanting to keep control of the project. It was a question that had been forming in my mind over the last few months but that I had never asked. Indeed, before the interview I was still unsure that I would ask it. I had pondered about my reluctance to ask him about the issue, and felt that it derived from a sense of putting myself in a position where I was challenging someone who was in a more authoritative position than I was, and who had been very helpful to me personally in terms of both helping in the consent stages of my research, as well as giving up his own time for my questioning. In short, I might appear rude and ungrateful. Yet I had decided I wanted to ask him about it because it seemed an important part of the story of this project. In any case, the risk felt limited at this exit interview stage: I already had most of my data and this might be the last time we even met. In short, my pragmatic pursuit of PhD goals was a strong motivating force.

Below is the text from the exit interview. There is a moment right at the start where I hesitated and was aware of sensing a moment of doubt about whether I was really going to ask this or whether I should finish the interview here:

C: um and then I think *finally* oh .. the other thing .. I have no idea what you'll think of this hha.. when I was going through the meeting transcripts and thinking about what you'd said afterwards about your thoughts in general about speaking up and how you can quite often get bored, and do you remember the thing you were saying [about a technique to change the conversation], if you think people are going on, ha

S: Mm

- C: and that's all, that's actually about .. um .. a lot of it is quite controlling .. in a way .. that when you get *bored* or when you think the conversation's going off you you will intervene and you will try and make it *better* again and yet the whole co-inquiry thing, what you're talking about is actually about stepping back from controlling and I didn't know how those two things kind of sat *together* and .. where were the boundaries between what you were controlling and what you weren't controlling?
- S: Um... that is er a very interesting .. question ... um.. . in terms of *those* meetings .. um.. well we talked .. I would maybe say *steering* rather than controlling
- C: OK *steering* rather than *controlling* ((into the recorder))
- S: because it was um and then steering, you know, is kind of like dynamic scaffolding
- C: Yeah OK
- S: but um going beyond that I would say I was ... um a *participant* in those meetings rather than .. if I was chairing them I would have behaved in a very different way ... as a *participant* in a co-inquiry process rather than facilitator, which is kind of what a chair would be, then I think it's absolutely fine to be, you know, strong, the worse thing is that everyone .. everyone is *meek* in a co-inquiry process and that's where you get the kind of design by committee, inevitably dull and boring
- C: I don't mind, kind of
- S: I don't want to say anything, I don't want to rock the boat .. In a sense you want .. you want um .. everyone to be active. It was interesting that there was no chair really, that would have codified I think where the power was
- C: Yeah
- S: and we ... er I think informally from [university dept] we felt that we didn't .. erm because we'd been quite strong in terms of saying this is what we're doing .. you know, implicitly we're spending the money so this is what we're doing .. I didn't feel the need to say I'm chairing this

My question was meant to be about control in general in the project, but Sean interprets it in terms of controlling the project group meetings specifically, and I do

not intervene to correct him. I am too concerned with placating what might have been taken as a rude question by taking a not-too-serious line: the talking into the audio recorder, for instance, was mimicking an action that Sean had carried out earlier in the interview, when he made sure that it was on record that Nina was a 'problem' by speaking closely into the machine.

Sean rejects my use of the word 'control': he is 'steering' rather than 'controlling'. The word 'steering' suggests influence, through the use of 'dynamic scaffolding', rather than the more coercive 'controlling'. Although in previous conversations he had talked at some length about how he had wrested control away from Nina (see Section 8.4.3), during this conversation now, when I ask more directly about the matter, he avoids the connection. His account, of how he steers rather than controls, suggests at least a negative local connotation of the idea of control. He is not meant to be controlling this project; he has said that he has given up control to his design team.

The next distinction in categories that he makes is between participant and chair/facilitator, with his argument resting essentially on that he, as a participant, has as much control as any other person in the meeting. The positioning of 'participant' permits communication that is strong rather than weak, for boats to be rocked and for him to take an active role. While *not* saying anything as a chair would be fine, as a *participant* it is characterised as dull and boring. What is notable here is the interpenetration of the language of co-inquiry that Sean has previously been bracketing as happening elsewhere: it was not within these project group meetings that the creative dialogue was being developed, the creativity belonged to the university, not the council. At this point, however, the voice of a co-inquiry participant allows for the behaviour he is describing, that seeks to influence and to be

strong. The discursive reference to having no chair, and thus no codification of power, points again to the distinction between committee meetings, and the formal processes associated with them, and this set of project meetings that have much looser (and inferentially, less controlled) arrangements.

The construction of an egalitarian positioning as a participant, the same as the rest of the group, is then potentially undermined with a recognition that some form of informal control exists, in the character of the research funder, in connection with 'spending the money', and thus justifying the directives about what will be done. The implication is that the chairing arrangements become irrelevant and can remain undiscussed. The university department's organisational voice, and the change of pronouns from 'I' to 'we', however changes the responsibility for such direction, however: it was not his personal interest that is being imposed but attentiveness to the requirements of the research project that controlled such matters. The discursive force of the early arguments, in which the threat was made to walk away from the project, continues to apply and has created certain understandings that do not need constant verbal reinforcement. Sean can position himself as having influence and yet being uninterested in visible demonstrations of control by noting that he 'didn't feel the need to say I'm chairing this'. The lack of clarity about such arrangements becomes a means to guard against potential accusations of wanting control. Without an explicit, voiced discussion about who is controlling what, Sean may be able to continue to control without appearing to control, as Kerry in the previous section suggested might have been happening (though she does not single out Sean explicitly).

I did not ask Sean further follow-up questions about the issue: I was just glad at that point that I had felt brave enough to ask the question.

9.9 How acoustic silence is not the same as withholding

There is one final piece of data to introduce: to show how the concept of withholding is not synonymous with acoustic silence as a gap in the conversation where nobody is talking.

At the December meeting, the university team requested a delay in the timetable for the handover of their report to the councils:

Kerry: So the final report, um, as you know we've got the Co-De partners coming over

Nina: Yeah

Kerry: at the start of the second week, when everyone's back at work, um .. as there is so much data to process and collate, which is taking hours um .. would end of January be agreeable for the final report?

((1s pause))

Alison: That's fine with me

((Nina shakes her head slightly and looks away from Alison towards Paul who continues looking down and writing something in his notebook))

Kerry: We were talking about also a meeting .. maybe the week before that, where we show you it and go through the content

Paul: Right

Nina: Yeah

Kerry: so it'd be like the third week of January that you'd see it

Alison: Yeah

Kerry: so you're prepared and then we ...*((both Kerry and Sean look towards Nina))* organise a handover event for the last week, is that ...

((2s pause))

Nina: Y- .. If that's what you can work to, then yeah

Sean: But if it's going to cause problems

((Nina looks towards Paul, who looks up from the papers on the desk in front of him))

Nina: Well it doesn't cause particular problems, it's just

Alison: No

Nina: you know

Paul: No huu *((looks at Alison))*

Nina: it just adds to, it's fine, you know if that's what it is then

Alison: I don't
[think we can

Paul: [We can build that in, build that in to what we do

Alison: Because we're better off quality, you know,
[getting things right than getting it on time and stuff

Nina: [Oh yeah, I know, that's what I, if that's the time you need, then er
yeah

In this strip of interaction, Alison speaks up first. It takes Nina a longer time to provide an answer, after a pause of two seconds during which both members of the university team are looking at her and awaiting her response. Her hesitation in responding to Kerry produces a reaction from Sean to enquire further 'if it's going to cause problems'. Alison provides reasons why it is better to wait longer, for 'quality', to which Nina concurs.

I was curious about whether Nina might have been holding something back from this part of the conversation because her agreement seemed muted. I asked Nina about the incident when we met after the meeting.

She said, 'I didn't look pleased, did I? I suppose I wasn't really.'

I asked whether the date change was going to cause her problems.

'No, it's just that the timing keeps changing, it has now gone from mid-January to end January, and there's nothing wrong with it, it's just that we're having to wait around. So there's a number of things that we're waiting for, we were going to give it [the report] to the Manor House owners, we were going to have a communications meeting, but only when the final report is done. And it feels mean, like there's no deadline or anything, it's just that we're having to wait around.'

'Did you feel that you couldn't say that then at the meeting?'

'I thought I had expressed the view that it wasn't great. I guess I'm a nice person. I don't really want to complain about it, because there's no particular reason we have to have it. It's just that until we have the report, it's all guesswork, we don't know what's in it, so we can't do anything for definite.'

There are two points to emphasise here. Firstly, I and others read into Nina's agreement to the change in deadline a dissatisfaction about the arrangement which is at odds with the words she used in the meeting. Kerry, for instance, noted afterwards, 'I think it felt most awkward when we were talking about extending the deadline, it was like Nina was really uncomfortable with that.' Our interpretation makes use of her bodily gestures and the acoustic silence that apparently denoted a moment of trouble, as Morison and Macleod (2014) suggest. The communicative force of having 'expressed the view that it wasn't great' did not require Nina to use audible linguistic communication. A non-linguistic form of communication may not be able to communicate the nuances, and in particular the precise reason for her dissatisfaction, that Nina describes to me using verbal language after the meeting, but nevertheless her non-verbal communication has some perlocutionary force.

The second point is that Nina offers a non-verbal form of communication as acceptable, as still allowing her to claim to be a nice person rather than a mean one. However, this claim of niceness seems to rely on a withholding of the verbal proposition. Putting the communication into words, making a more unambiguous manifestation of the state of not being pleased, would be quite a different matter and would need more justification, which Nina says she cannot provide ('there's no deadline or anything'), for her sense of displeasure about being kept waiting. Given there is no real pragmatic implication, she must withhold her own personal feeling of frustration.

9.10 Summary of emergent themes

In Chapter 6 the council officers' accounts of silence constructed a practice of stepping back and disengaging from the substantive delivery of project work during its initial stages as an appropriate action. Here in this chapter, at the end stage of the project, similar discursive constructions came into play again, with role boundaries and organisational responsibilities again being invoked as a reason for staying silent. However, the boundaries and responsibilities were now being referenced by different people, by the university staff rather than the council officers, as their final report was being handed over to the councils for the next stages of project planning. At this stage also, the council officers started to raise topics that had been previously off limits for discussion as they positioned themselves as now becoming more active again in the project work.

Another theme that recurred in this chapter was the connection between silence and uncertainty, elaborated in two slightly different ways. In Chapter 7, staying silent was constructed as a feature associated with uncertainty in relation to professional

expertise. Here it was connected, firstly, to an uncertainty in regard to organisational representation: staying silent at a point in time before an official authoritative response has been confirmed and thus cannot yet be reported as definitive, at a time when speaking up might leave someone exposed and accountable for providing wrong information. It was also connected to to a period of instrumental uncertainty: staying silent while working out how a task might be delivered or what next steps should be proposed. While in some circumstances, this period of instrumental uncertainty might be argued to be a time when discussion *should* be taking place - to consider and debate possible options and actions - in this project the group discussions had largely not taken on this interactional pattern, with the two pieces of project work being kept separate from each other. For both Sean and Paul, the relevant addressees - or Gruman and Saks' (2014) 'targets' for voice - were external to this project group: for Sean the research project funders, and for Paul the council managers and Project Board.

The discussions presented in this chapter therefore highlight an orientation to future addressees, with silence becoming positioned and evaluated more in relation to forthcoming conversations with people in other locations. In Alison's construction of her silence, even while in her account she situated herself in the conversation with her project colleagues, it was with an implicit reference to future conversations with council colleagues when the university team would be no longer present. In this instance for Alison, the language of co-inquiry was providing centrifugal opportunities, for new ways of working to be developed, rather than a centripetal force that stabilised existing social configurations. The same centrifugal opportunities for change that the language of co-inquiry offered were also drawn on by Nina, as she talked about encouraging other stakeholders to use the new ideas

introduced by the university team to lobby for doing things differently, and influencing how the councils might take forward the work from now on. Nina described processes of influence, of both the Manor House owners and the council managers, as being felt more forcefully through being directed via members of the general public and local residents than through her own voice.

The theme of influence and control was also developed with regard to the more immediate dynamics in face to face meetings. Sean's account depicted different discursive positions in which different patterns of speaking might be expected and enabled. Both Sean and Nina's talk drew on a similar opposition between the two relative positions of a chair/facilitator - someone who has some control over the conversation but is constrained in their own speaking - and to a more free-talking participant. While the idea of giving up control may have had specific relevance in this local project based on co-inquiry principles, nevertheless the discourse about interpersonal dynamics reflects Argyris' (1990, 1991) distinction between espoused theories and theories-in-use. The discussions about hidden agendas and not talking about interpersonal relationships pointed to how others' motivations and intentions might be inferred but not openly discussed. Staying silent is not equated here with futility but with a more strategic and instrumental dimension. My conversation with Sean provided an example of how difficult it felt for me to raise the issue of control as an explicit topic for discussion.

The last section in the chapter pointed to how non-verbal communication could be conceptualised as different from withholding, and how an absence of an explicit verbal utterance was argued by Nina to be nevertheless a form - and a more socially acceptable form - of communicative expression.

I have now presented all the empirical data in this thesis. In the next two chapters, I turn to a theoretical discussion, and present two particular proposals based on analysing the patterns within the data. Firstly, I suggest that silence as a phenomenon emerges and is constructed in multiple forms, of which a conscious act of withholding is only one. I explore this proposal further in Chapter 11 as part of the discussion about how a dialogic model of communication brings a new perspective to the study of silence in the organisational behaviour literature. The second proposal is that silence is shaped, made sensible by, and situated within, the multiple relationships being navigated by participants. This proposal is explored in the next chapter.

10 DISCUSSION - STORYLINES OF SILENCE

In this first of the two discussion chapters in this thesis, I concentrate on the discursive features of participants' talk about their own silence. This chapter therefore responds to the first research question set out in Section 1.3. I outline and discuss the implications of three discursive storylines by which I came to interpret and make sense of participants' accounts. I suggest that silence as a phenomenon is inherently shaped and made sensible by, and situated within, the multiple relationships that have developed or are being developed and sustained at the time.

The three storylines generate different ways of providing social significance and function to silence: in dealing with interpersonal relationships; negotiating and responding to different accountabilities and managerial relationships and duties; and pragmatically pursuing goals and objectives. Each storyline sets up a different orientation between project group members, based upon the different type of relational logic and the different function for communication that underpins it. The latter two storylines introduce and make relevant different characters from outside the immediate project group to whom the speaker has relational ties and obligations. The idea of a choice to speak up or stay silent becomes a product embedded within the different types of relationships in and across the storylines. The significant amount of variability in participants' accounts of their silence becomes sensible in relation to individual participants' localised and temporary positioning within these different relationships as they are manifest at the time.

In terms of the structure of the chapter, I introduce each storyline separately, starting each with a summary archetypal narrative that sets out the particular range of discursive categories and associated normative assumptions about communicative

practice that arise from them; the associated relational logic that underpins the storyline; and the type of relationships it establishes between the speaker and other categories of people or groups. After the summary introduction, I then explore some of the implications of that particular storyline for interpreting the phenomenon of silence in this particular project group context. After introducing separately all three storylines, I provide some wider, more general thoughts about them, and how they might be used and developed further in organisational and management research.

10.1 Storyline 1 - interpersonal relationship management

10.1.1 Summary and relational logic

This is a storyline of interpersonal relationships in which someone gets to know other people as individuals, each with different and unique characteristics and personalities. It moves from a starting point where another person is unknown, and thus his/her responses cannot be predetermined, to an end point where someone is well-known and where likely responses and viewpoints can be anticipated, even when new issues arise.

The underlying logic is one of relating, where conversation can both improve or harm ongoing personal relationships (Shotter, 1993, 2008). The range of discursive resources created by the positioning in this storyline is based upon a normative construction of individuals acting in socially capable and responsive ways toward other human beings as individual characters. The positioning work emphasises the work done by the speaker in order to orientate appropriately to the other person, based upon the idea that people are uniquely individual and that someone's understanding and experience of the other *as* a unique individual creates the way in which to communicate with him/her. The relevant characters in the story are the

participants in the immediate project group with whom the speaker is engaging in the story. Silence as a concept is made sensible within the work of engaging with real individuals whose personalities or characteristics are constructed as being difficult or, alternatively, easy-going and pleasant.

The positioning resources made available in this storyline start with people's first encounters of each other. One does not yet know the other person's personal style, background, concerns, or unique idiosyncrasies. Communication is linked to social actions to get to know the other person. Gradually, the storyline moves through a description of positions where people are getting to know each other better. People start to uncover liked and disliked aspects about each other. A sense of similarities and differences between individual characters becomes created and confirmed.

Eventually, there comes a point when another person's character feels well-known, and the speaker occupies a position when the likely responses of that person can be anticipated, when one knows how s/he will react. Feelings of friendship, or alternatively of indifference, apathy or dislike, have become established.

Communication no longer involves the task of finding out about the other's essential character and personality, their personal concerns and interests, but instead takes on a more habitual and patterned character. Individuals start to use what might be conceptualised as a customised, highly individualised speech genre to use with that person that responds to the interpretation of the 'kind of person' (Shotter, 2008), that this person is. What this final positioning implies is a tying down of possible meanings in communication, an improved sense of whether utterances should be taken as insults, whether they contain bad intentions and so on.

The practice of silence, and the choice of speaking up or staying silent, within the storyline are connected to, and described in terms of:

- essentialist categories of personalities or personality types (for example, people who are volatile and quick to anger or who are laid back and relaxed; people who are considered capable or incapable of change, for instance),
- categories of personal understanding and similarity of worldview (those to whom one can easily relate versus those to whom one cannot; those with whom one would like to keep in touch, or to whom one feels some affinity, versus those with whom one would not), and
- categories of duration and depth of acquaintance (for instance, trusted colleagues versus new acquaintances).

10.1.2 Storyline 1 implications for silence

This storyline of managing interpersonal relationships sets up the function of silence as facilitating the ongoing friendly engagement between the individual members of the project group and the maintenance of an even keel as they encounter moments of difficulty during their collaboration together. Martin's discussion of temporary silence and deferral and Paul's discussion of politeness, for instance, point to an understanding of a norm of behaviour that avoids face threats, and in which one's own behaviour should be regulated. Martin points to the emotional nature of the outburst about the posters, and implies that he should have stayed silent more than he did because he let the emotional nature get the better of him. The core consideration is one of getting on with each other, regardless of whether the individual person likes or dislikes the others. The emphasis on the quality of engagement mentioned by Tsoukas (2009), in his contrast between calculated and relational engagement, is reflected here.

The use of the storyline develops certain relational allegiances and oppositions between different members of the group at different times. It is notable that Sean and Nina are constructed frequently as people to whom particular adaptation and accommodation is required. Their appearance as discursive figures often allows the speaker to illustrate his/her own contrasting social competence and adaptability either through voice interventions or through staying silent. For instance, Alison's developing acquaintance with Sean's character, enabling her to claim 'that's just Sean' by the time of the poster argument, allows her to emphasise her own *usual* silence in order not to undermine or offend others. Similarly, her close and trusted relationship with Nina is referenced to permit Alison to use a particular communicative style that otherwise might be heard as rude and abrasive.

Categories of friendliness and similarity, however, are not simply associated with an ease and openness of talk. Certainly, Paul refers to the process of learning to drop certain words like *constraints* in order to avoid Sean's negative reaction, but he also notes his work of rephrasing to avoid embarrassing Alison as someone he is friendly with (Section 8.4.2). His discourse equates anticipatory, self-imposed corrective actions as part of a description of his conscious practice of silence, which is interpersonally sensitive towards someone he knows and values. The idea of self-monitoring, which Premeaux and Bedeian (2003) note as influential in choices of speaking up or staying silent, is reflected here, but in a very different way than they elaborate. While they suggest that high self-monitors and low self-monitors speak up for different impression management reasons, the more salient point here is that a sensitivity of language allows for communication to be adapted and uttered appropriately in order to maintain a positive relationship.

There are two particular issues of note in this storyline: the impact of getting to know someone, and how this process changes and justifies both silence and voice practices; and participants' emphasis not on *group* dynamics but on particular relationships with individuals in the group. I develop these points in the next two sections.

10.1.2.1 Getting to know someone: the changing efforts of communicating

In the beginning of the project, there are attempts to learn about and understand each other's different concerns. The talk that occurs at the beginning of the project, such as the clarifying conversation at the airport in Stockholm that Kerry notes, and the discussions between the three council colleagues about how they should respond to Sean, develops particular understandings of who these new colleagues are and what motivates them: what they are scared of, what makes them angry, and so on.

It is noticeable that there is a significant amount of talk during the early stages of the project when I first started my research, and a significant amount of talk *about* the early days of the project, when topics of getting to know people, orienting to new and different ways of working, and to new colleagues, are mentioned. However, there was relatively little subsequent discussion with me about any changes in the characters of other project group members that the speaker has noticed, outside of my own introduction of the topic at the exit interview stage. There are some exceptions to this, such as Sean's description (Section 8.4.3) of how the council officers had become more trusting. Nevertheless, on the whole, the orientation period seems to stop: project group members start to be described to me in individual accounts as finalised characters. There is constructed in participants' discourse a predictability of the other person's response, while at the same a construction of the socially adaptable and changeable nature of their own response.

Silence in relation to the development of understanding of another person seems to function to help develop a picture of the speaker as socially adaptable and responsive, but it also helps to excuse a situation where the speaker may be seen as not relating well to someone. The idea of getting to know people as individuals is used not only to underscore a social capability and adaptability, to show how one can start to understand what topics to avoid and what words to edit out, but also to highlight not just the *speaker's* lack of ability to respond appropriately after attempts to be responsive have failed, but to point out how *anyone else* would be in precisely the same boat: see for instance Nina's discourse about how everyone else but Sean is on her wavelength (Section 8.3.1). It is a similar discursive construction that can be found in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, as respondents blame the other person (namely, their manager) for the fear or futility that they feel about speaking up.

Getting to know someone, then, is also used in order to underscore the difficulties in communication, and to emphasise the effort involved. Having got to know someone justifies the stance one now takes to them: this knowledge of the other's character affects who one ultimately feels willing and interested to make the effort of communication with. Both Nina and Sean use a language of personalities about each other. It is here that the temporality of the relationship between Nina and Sean makes a difference, and is used by her to construct a rationality in her behaviour of staying silent until the project is over. The third storyline resource of pragmatic action (discussed later) overlaps at this point. The sense of futility here emerges after previous attempts to engage. The commitment to the other person ebbs away along with the communication, with silence connected to a position of no longer bothering about maintaining the relationship. Sean's use of this storyline meanwhile, that Nina as a character is incapable of change, gives a justification for his ongoing

exclusion of her from the university team's work. The flexibility in this storyline allows silence to be both a responsive and active gesture, but also an indication of resignation and giving up. It is both input into and outcome from the relationship development and management processes.

10.1.2.2 Collective sensemaking, groups and audience

There are two slightly different points that might be brought out from the data in this study in relation to individual and group dynamics. The first is that participants tended to describe their accounts of silence in relation to specific individuals rather than being described at the level of the group. The second is that even when there was a common story of non-involvement and a need to step back, the individual implications for silence still remained dramatically different. I discuss both these points in turn below.

Previous research on silence and voice in groups has used group-level constructs, such as group voice climate (Morrison, Wheeler-Smith and Kamdar, 2011), and theoretical processes of collective sensemaking about whether it is futile or risky to speak up (Morrison and Milliken, 2000), in order to predict speaking up behaviour. What is noticeable in the data here, however, is how participants singled out particular individuals in relation to their discussion of speaking up or staying silent. It is not the *group*-level cohesion of Janis (1972) or Bowen and Blackmon (2003), nor the *group*'s ostracism or disapproval which is constructed as pertinent here in participants' accounts. It is the sensitivity of the audience of a specific individual, rather than the collective hearing of the group, which is made relevant. Additionally, the presence or absence of particular individuals as third party audiences (Goffman, 2003/1967, 1983) rather than as direct interlocutors, such as when Alison may overhear Paul's report from the Project Board meeting, affected how people talked

about what might be communicated and in what way. The sensitivity in relationships becomes very specifically defined.

Nevertheless, at the end of the project, both Sean and Nina identify and discuss the lost opportunity to have examined group dynamics, and the relationship between individual tensions and the collective processes of the group (Section 9.7). Of course, it is not clear to what extent such thoughts may have been withheld consciously by group members during the earlier parts of the project, or whether these issues were preconscious, as Gray and Schruijer (2009) suggest. What is interesting, however, is that such accounts of the group could be told after the end of the project, in the form of lessons learnt in hindsight, while accounts of interpersonal individual difficulties could be told during the project delivery.

On the second point, even while it might be argued that there is a common narrative among the council officers concerning the need to step back from involvement, this does not then translate into similar descriptions to me of their own practice of silence at particular moments in the project. In fact, the variation between Nina, Paul and Alison's individual accounts after any meeting is striking. The social action of each of the council officers is not described as limited or impacted upon in the same way at all.

Both these points suggest that further qualitative research about the relational impact *of individuals* and *for individuals* within groups is worthwhile, and indeed may help to take forward Morrison, Wheeler-Smith and Kamdar's (2011) findings of radically different group voice climates within the same one organisation. What seems to be more pertinent - or perhaps simply easier to talk about - to explicate silence is the nature of individual relationships, and how a conversation at any moment fits into

the wider context of that relationship. The lack of reference to the group per se is an interesting feature in participants' discourse.

10.2 Storyline 2 - representation and responsibility

10.2.1 Summary and relational logic

This is a storyline of the proper fulfilment of duties and responsibilities, in which communicative practice is connected to, and defined by, one's job role and organisational membership. Silence becomes demarcated both by topic and time-related issues during social interaction with others with different roles and different organisational memberships. The underlying logic in this storyline is one of being bound by duties of job role and organisational representation rather than one's own personal characteristics or commitments, and the storyline brings in other characters from outside of the immediate project group to whom the speaker is accountable in some way (line managers, Project Board members, etc).

There are two slightly different narrative strands within the storyline. The first strand starts with the individual's entry point into a new role as a novice, moves through the process of learning about the professional duties and responsibilities connected to that role, and eventually reaches a positioning of accumulated experience and expertise in which the role is performed well. The second strand in the storyline is connected specifically with cross-organisational encounters, as one moves from working within one's own organisation to representing the organisation while working with others from other organisations and back again. There are therefore two different elements of voice appropriation that are brought out: the expert use of a professional voice, and the authorising use of the organisational voice.

While the discursive resources in the first narrative strand in the storyline rely on the movement triggered by processes of learning and the gradual accumulation of expertise, the variation in the second strand is related to how and when authorisation is achieved to speak or act on behalf of an organisation. In this regard, it may be instructive to consider Taylor and Cooren's (1997) writing about *organisational communication* as being not the Mead-ian *I* who is speaking (Mead, 1934), but another entity - the university, the City or County Council, etc. Taylor and Cooren (1997), drawing on Goffman's (1981) distinctions between author, animator and principal in his discussion of footing, use the example of an ambassador (a real person as actor) acting (as an agent) on behalf of his or her government (the principal): it is not the ambassador who is committed (as the actor/agent), but the government (the principal) through the ambassador's communication (Taylor and Cooren, 1997, p.427). In the storyline's underpinning logic, to speak is to *be* the organisation momentarily. One must, however, be recognised as speaking legitimately as the agent for the principal on whose behalf one is speaking.

Therefore, the processes of sanctioning the messenger as well as the message become key features of the storyline. Communication here is not a matter of speaking on behalf of oneself with one's own ideas, but of representing an official and expert viewpoint, being the channel through which the organisational or professional voice speaks, and through which one discharges the incumbent responsibilities in the social encounter in question. The range of positions that become available in the storyline are drawn from:

- organisational membership (insiders / outsiders);
- roles and role duties (in-role / extra-role); and

- the dimension of developing expertise and competence in carrying out one's role.

10.2.2 Storyline 2 implications for silence

In this inter-organisational project, specific delineations of communication and involvement according to organisational membership became enacted and re-enacted over time. Which organisation one belonged to was constructed as a strong influence on what participants said they needed to talk about, and what they did *not* need to, or *should* not, talk about. The discursive use of organisational affiliations as a feature in participants' talk about their silence serve to bind Sean, Kerry and Martin together as one sub-group, and Paul, Nina and Alison as another. However, there are then also further sub-divisions of Sean and Kerry versus Martin (as the freelance consultant rather than full research team member), and of Paul and Nina versus Alison (as the City rather than County Council representative). The storyline's discursive effect is for the practice of silence to produce a strong separating force that isolates the two elements of project work from each other. As a consequence, the two heteroglossic languages and related working practices of the university and the council never fully merge and hybridise.

10.2.2.1 The authorising voice of other characters outside the group

Notwithstanding that all the participants in this project were operating with a significant degree of autonomy in their everyday organising, participants' accounts create a strong discursive presence of authority figures as characters. This might be surprising, since this was a project group without formally defined hierarchies. The sensitivity to the relationship with managers invites comparison to the very different social situations of employee-supervisor relationships that are described in the

literature in Chapter 2. Here, the appearances of line managers and accountable bodies, such as councillors and Project Board members, provide particular resources for social action in this project group context. These authorising voices specify the requirements for individual action, feedback and reporting duties, in this setting of inter-organisational partnership working. Alison noted that the council officers could withdraw from involvement because her line manager was happy that she do so, and was not expecting anything other from her. However, Nina's use of the expectations of her line manager and of the Project Board for feedback and inputs shows how her work was being compromised, and how this project was difficult for her: she was not able to pass back information or any meaningful progress report. Yet perhaps she is caught in a double-bind here, in that her line manager was also expecting her to develop a better relationship with the City Council. If she pushes to ask for more information, she may run into difficulties in the relationship with Alison.

In relation to these other authorising characters, one of the implications of Storyline 2 is the highlighting of a particular type of performativity in communication: when the communication is directed to particular people (fulfilling a duty of 'reporting to') or derived from particular people ('reporting from'). The first mode of thinking is central to Pinder and Harlos' (2001) concept of employee silence and Morrison and Milliken's (2000) concept of organisational silence, both of which suggest that, although there may be widespread talk and a commonly-held perspective about an issue, *silence* exists when the directionality is not right, when the issue is not communicated *to* a manager or someone with official capacity to respond. Without such performative routing *to* a manager, speech acts do not constitute 'voice' according to much of the organisational behaviour literature.

Meanwhile, without such performative routing *from* an authorising point, such as a manager or official role-holder, according to the storyline, the content of a message is not validated, and still contains some inherent risk (an idea taken up again in the next section). Thus, the emailed feedback to Nina about the posters could be claimed to be problematic, both by Sean and Alison, when more official routes for sanctioning communications - namely Sean as Kerry's line manager and the councils' communication departments - became identified as having been absent from the process. As Paul notes in Chapter 8, problems arise when managers bring in different conflicting perspectives at a later point. The imposition of the centripetal authoritative discourse of organisational managers becomes relevant at moments particularly when faults and issues have been identified in hindsight.

10.2.2.2 Timing, involvement and silence

In this storyline there are different temporal points at which issues need to be fed *in* to the discussion on behalf of organisational interests, or fed *back* to other organisational colleagues and managers; points at which one may or may not report across organisations, as official agreement, proposals and so on move from being unclear or uncertain to being confirmed and authorised by internal managers, and thus communicable to a wider audience; and points at which one needs to engage, or step back from engaging, with other people as official role-holders.

The taken-for-granted nature of the temporal elements of these resources, and their availability for particular members of the group at particular times, can perhaps be illustrated through the following examples. It would have been difficult - indeed, probably absurd - for Kerry to suggest that she stayed silent early in the project due to her *role* not being relevant, but she draws on the justification of lack of expertise and uncertainty within the delivery or performance of that role. Additionally, it

seemed quite legitimate for Sean not to offer any further ideas and help towards the end of the project, as the university was preparing its exit. However, if he had identified his concern about the handover and the university legacy earlier, it would have been difficult to use the idea of the inappropriateness of involvement at that stage as a reason for staying silent. Meanwhile, neither Sean nor Kerry could have spoken on behalf of the City Council to suggest that Nina disengage from the project work; only Alison could do so as the City Council's representative. She is the only one within the project group who could provide the County Council officers with the reassurance, from the City Council's perspective, about the acceptability of living with the uncertainty of the project if they withdraw.

Storyline 2 emphasises the appropriateness in becoming, or remaining, silent in order to perform the responsibilities and duties required in one's job, where it is not the right time or topic to discuss, for instance. However, it also highlights the tensions involved in authorised communication. The data suggests that sometimes there are difficulties of knowing when, and how, it is appropriate to proceed, as Alison notes in Chapter 6, when she held back because she was not project manager and as Paul notes in Chapter 9, in relation to the discussion of a way forward that they had not yet proposed nor agreed with council colleagues and managers. Anticipating what the authoritative voice might say becomes an important component of fulfilling organisational duties. Individual employees have to make judgments about action on their own, and decide when it is appropriate to stay silent, when it is appropriate to pass on information to others, and when to authorise action on behalf of the organisation without further in-house consultation. There is some autonomy in action but it is limited and risky. Although these matters are constructed as becoming easier to judge when one is expert and experienced, as Kerry suggests,

there seems always to be a possibility of challenge, as happened for Nina and the posters.

10.2.2.3 Roles, role-spanning and professionalism

The idea of performing a role is a strong aspect of this storyline. In this sense, it is Goffman's (1959) appropriateness rather than Argyris' (1990) risk that is most emphasised in these explications about speaking up and staying silent.

Appropriateness here is delineated through two underlying propositions: that one should keep *within* one's role and not act beyond this; and that one should perform one's role *well*. I discuss these in turn below.

Firstly, silence becomes linked to the withholding of comments and opinions about activities recognised as lying outside of one's remit, most strongly expressed by Paul.

The discourse hints at a normative duty to stay within one's role, to speak up according to that role, and to stay silent when the work is not relevant to that role.

There are thus limits to the topics of conversation on which one might provide opinion and advice as part of one's professional voice. The premise underpinning this element of the storyline is that by keeping within one's own role, others are given room to perform well in their role too: going over and above these limits, in the extra-role, discretionary offering of new ideas, opinions or suggestions, might encroach upon others' roles and responsibilities. This is the basis of Alison's argument for staying silent at the beginning of the project, since she was not 'project manager', until the point at which she had to intervene to protect organisational interests. It is also the basis of the discussions about which role-holder(s) needed to be present at the community talks to represent the City Council (Section 8.1): that different staff members have different authorising functions.

Simpson and Carroll (2008) note that the idea of *role* has a kind of agency that is separate from the individual human actor; it has a power to demand some form of compliance with the behaviour that is associated with the role, and provides not only organisational legitimacy but also instigates duties of compliance, to act in a certain way in return. The implication in using a discourse of roles, of course, is that these roles are clearly demarcated and stable, enabling a suitable understanding and performance of them (Goffman, 1959; Simpson and Carroll, 2008) as well as a delineation between different job roles. Morrison (1994) nevertheless notes the difficulties of defining what is in-role and extra-role behaviours, and how understandings of 'perceived job breadth' differ not only between individual employees but also between employees and their supervisors. Indeed, some of the early misunderstandings in this project group emerged from the very fuzziness and lack of clarity about how the project was to be delivered, and who would be doing what. It was precisely these issues that were negotiated in the difficult early period of the project, and through which group members began to orient to each other and take up particular patterns of communication. The language of roles, and role appropriateness, arguably became mobilised as a legitimate way to carve out, contrast and demarcate the activities of the two sub-groupings of university and council, in what could be construed as a turf war between two individuals.

From the discursive perspective of this storyline, voice becomes positioned as inappropriate across role boundaries, since other colleagues would become positioned as less than competent. The normative duty to keep silent on matters outside of one's role remit creates an interesting comparison for the extra-role, discretionary characteristic that some authors have argued in definitions of voice (LePine and Van Dyne, 1998; see also Morrison, 2011). Such extra-role practice can

be illustrated as having a negative consequence for Martin in this project (see Section 7.3). He is cast in a bad light by various members of the university research team for being too talkative when he should be concentrating on facilitating the voice of the general public, and he ultimately has to stop attending the project meetings since other landscape designers complain about his inappropriate involvement.

Professional and organisational boundaries are also the crux of the matter for Sean's use of the storyline to exclude Nina from the design team's work: that she is interfering in matters that are to be quite adequately and appropriately handled by the university design team, and that her local authority discourse will be detrimental to the creativity of their work. The clash between Sean and Nina however is not that she is just too talkative, but that she is speaking *in the wrong way* for the university's research agenda. To the extent that Nina does not demonstrate her ability to learn the new co-inquiry language and its principles, she becomes open to criticism from Sean, and indeed Alison, for not being sufficiently adaptable and thus professional in her partnership working.

This leads to the second underlying proposition in local discursive constructions of silence, about the relevance of competence and performing one's role well which is shown within one's communicative practice. This element of the storyline is underpinned by the use of a logic which can be compared to role theory:⁶⁰ that an individual is socialised and grows into a role, becomes better and more experienced at performing it, and learns the accompanying social language - how to communicate and what *not* to say - as s/he becomes more expert. Being new to a role and being professionally inexperienced undermines the professional voice; one needs to learn

⁶⁰ See the description of role theory in Simpson and Carroll (2008).

both the actions and the required inactions of the professional role. Yet there is a tension here: that performing a role within the inter-organisational, collaborative nature of this project work includes being able to cross disciplines and different social groups and to speak other social and professional languages. This is the criticism that Nina makes of Sean: that he does not understand partnerships and will not make the effort to discuss and come to the required understanding.

The idea of competence can be used to examine the contrasting use of Storyline 2 resources by Paul and Nina, who are both technically performing the same role. Paul had only just started to work with this particular set of local stakeholders in this geographic area. He was new to this particular role in the organisation. He used the positioning resources that connected staying silent with the demonstration of professionalism while settling into a new job role. Nina's discourse, on the other hand, used the association of silence and expertise, when one is confident and steps back for others to learn or to facilitate others' contributions for information gathering. There is a conscious discipline (Bies, 2009) connected to staying silent in both these respects but in different ways at different stages, for the same function of demonstrating professionalism.

10.3 Storyline 3 - pragmatic action and influence

10.3.1 Summary and relational logic

This is a storyline of the individual as influential agent oriented to the delivery of objectives and future goals. The storyline starts with individual deliberations about how a goal might be achieved, an uncertainty and a searching for solutions and necessary resources for delivery, and moves through to action in which political negotiations need to be made with others. One has to make decisions and

compromises about what is important and urgent enough to raise; one has to engage in ranking exercises to decide what is most pressing and important to communicate and discuss. The storyline culminates in the successful delivery (or otherwise) of these goals, as silence is demonstrated to have been appropriate (or not).

Within the storyline are provisions for discursive positioning in which individual agency is enhanced or diminished as issues of power become negotiated. Other project group members become positioned as instrumental tools or obstacles to the successful delivery of goals in relation to other stakeholders. Other stakeholders, such as funding bodies and political stakeholders, are invoked as key targets for influencing, so that the perspective in the storyline is kept on what might happen in the future, and how the implications of current conversations and actions may play out in other scenarios.

The range of discursive positioning resources are provided in relation to:

- the goals and objectives that are constructed as either more or less important to pursue;
- characteristics connected to the speaker's situated personal ability to influence a situation; and
- the bases of power the speaker can command.

The characteristics of communication that become emphasised in this storyline are those linking illocutionary and perlocutionary force: the pragmatic effect of 'doing things' (Austin, 1975/1962) as a means to an end. Staying silent is emphasised as having a similar perlocutionary force as speaking up. Building on Blackman and Sadler-Smith's (2009) typology of silence, discussed in Chapter 2, I subdivide the pragmatic consideration of silence into:

- a choice not to speak up (that is, one could speak up but there is no need, either because the issue is not important enough or because someone else's voice can do just as well); and
- a requirement to stay silent as a necessary condition for success (one's own voice cannot achieve the same outcome, therefore others' voices are sought and utilised).

In Storyline 3, then, the pragmatic work of communication may be done through others' voices, by means of a ventriloquist-like silence. Implicit within the storyline is the understanding that the same words spoken by others and in other contexts may create different outcomes, such that other peoples' acts of speaking up may therefore be more influential than one's own. Communicative acts, comprising both speaking up but also staying silent, are framed as a product of rational and utilitarian processes of communication in this storyline.

10.3.2 Storyline 3 implications for silence

The use in participants' accounts of this storyline's logic of 'doing' creates specific positive affiliations between project group members based on similar pursuit of objectives. Firstly, the storyline develops an affiliation between Alison and Sean, as she seeks to 'develop the relationship with the university', and they both start to plan future work together after this first stage of the project. He provides further resources for her work, she provides access to council projects through which he can demonstrate increased research impact. Secondly, there is an affiliation between Nina and Martin, with Martin helping Nina to deliver the community talks and other community engagement for the greenspace site's longer-term enhancement. The negative affiliation that emerges is between Nina and Sean, as he constructs her way

of working as interfering with the creative delivery of his research project, and she constructs his exclusion of her and other council representatives as difficult for the join-up across the two pieces of work.

10.3.2.1 Priorities and damage limitation

Silence becomes offered as a tactic by individuals who are seeking to deliver and manage heavy workloads appropriately in the time constraints under which they are operating. Far from being equated with disengaged or acquiescent employees, the implication is that silence is a means by which a committed individual can pursue a strategy of damage limitation in her/his delivery of work objectives. Not raising issues is downplayed as a problem: it is only the least important issues, the least important discussions, that are dropped. The sensitivity in this storyline, to which some attention must be paid by speakers using its discursive resources, is the process of priority-setting and decision-making about what (and who) is important and what (and who) is not. This becomes a relative and contested matter across different participants' accounts and across different points in time.

In terms of timing, the point in the organising process at which silence is identified becomes pertinent in this storyline, in terms of how silence is both constructed and evaluated. This can be illustrated by comparing Kerry's discourse in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8. Her dilemma of whether or not to raise her uncertainty about the selection process for the workshop is something that she discusses with me at a time before she has taken action. In that situation, nothing bad ensued: the workshop went well and produced good results that could be reported back to the research funders as well as to the councils. In another situation, with the posters in Chapter 8, the action she took turned out to be less successful, with Sean categorising the posters as problematic for their research work. The lack of consultation with Sean

about the posters, what she fears might have been interpreted by him as deliberate withholding, is given a negative evaluation, although she still justifies her actions through recourse to the pragmatic necessities of Storyline 3: the positioning work frames her rather unsuccessful action as still having been well-intended.

The point to note is the different experiential and descriptive emphasis on the *uncertainty* of silence during the process of managing workload and trying to ensure that the most important work gets carried out, and how positive or negative connotations are offered after outcomes of actions can be judged. When one can evaluate the consequences, it is easier to judge whether more time should have been spent discussing the details of a task! Here Cullinane and Donaghey's (2014) critique, of the organisational behaviour literature's tendency to focus on silence from a managerialist perspective, becomes relevant, where withholding becomes attributable as an individual phenomenon and hence used, and useful, as part of a blame management (Bies, 2009) strategy. A pragmatic withholding only tends to become defined as a problem in hindsight, in the same way as authorising procedures in Storyline 2 are noted as deficient only in hindsight.⁶¹

How the importance of a goal is defined also becomes, of course, a relative matter from different people's perspectives. The engagement with the substantive content of the project - how it is conducted, with what sectors of the community, by what means - is downplayed in Alison's version of the project story in favour of what she argues is the more important goal of developing the relationship with the university. What Alison casts as unimportant, the council officers' involvement that can be sacrificed, is precisely the aspect that is constructed as important in Nina's accounts,

⁶¹ I come back to this point about the overlaps and distinctions between Storylines 2 and 3 later in the chapter.

in terms both of Storyline 2, discharging her project management duties of reporting, and of Storyline 3, carrying out the next stages of the greenspace project work, keeping City councillors, the general public and the Manor House owners on board.

10.3.2.2 Working through others and power

To derive pragmatic benefit from the type of silence described in the first of the two bullet points on page 274 - that is, to choose not to speak up - it matters only that the work is done (or that the communicative utterance expressed and the hearer is influenced). It is a positioning that Martin uses (page 171) when he talks about staying silent if someone else has already raised the issue in conversation. It is also the basis of the explicit proposal that Alison puts to Paul and Nina for the three of them to withdraw from the project's detail: the university team's activity will save the council officers from having to do the work themselves, and the only thing they might lose, Alison argues, is time. The identity of the other speaker in this sense is not central to the construction of the silence. It could have been a different organisation who delivered the consultation for the councils; it just happens to be this university team.

For the second of the bullet points, however, where silence is a necessary prerequisite for success, it does matter who the other speaker is. To use another's voice for a different and more successful outcome than one could achieve oneself relies on the critical relationship between the person whose voice is harnessed (the second speaker; or perhaps rather crudely, the ventriloquist's dummy) and the intended hearer/recipient target of the voice. The benefits of the ventriloquism are derived precisely from the assumption that a different perlocutionary force can be achieved by the other person speaking than by the person staying silent. It is the same topic discussed with the same hearer but, through changing speakers, the

perlocutionary force alters and the outcome changes. The effective positioning of one's own silence depends on the comparative effectiveness of the other speaker in context.

The relevant aspects of the other speaker that participants note in their discourse, to show this perlocutionary effect, include personal characteristics of communicative style, with the notion that some people are naturally better at achieving certain results in certain situations. This is reflected in Alison's comment that she and Nina often play 'good guy, bad guy' (page 211), where she suggests that people may respond better to one personal style over another, and that it is 'not a big deal'. Other distinctions rely on Storyline 2-type constructions of the appropriateness of role connected to particular types of communication. Kerry notes a similar distinction to Alison's above, but based on the categories of employee and manager: she 'coaches' people and Sean sends the 'shirty emails' if they 'don't play ball' (page 212). Still other distinctions are associated with more local matters of interpersonal history, drawing on Storyline 1 resources: Kerry notes, for instance, that Martin can say things to Nina that Sean cannot (see Section 6.3).

Silence is elaborated as a construct that both illustrates the holding of power as well as the lack of power. There is some agency associated with silence in these constructions above, even if it is of a limited scope involving simply the recognition of the speaker's own inability to achieve an outcome and the utilisation of another's more effective voice. As both Brown and Coupland (2005) and Fletcher and Watson (2007) point out, it is far too simplistic to equate silence with powerlessness. The distinct ways in which Sean and Nina position themselves in relation to silence and power, and the different embodied experiences of silence that they describe, are worthy of a little more exploration in this regard.

Sean's construction of his own silence often draws on this storyline of pragmatic doing: of letting go and giving power to others. However, he himself identifies the basis of his power *in this project* as derived from the research funding money: the resource to deliver the project comes from the university and therefore they can do as they want (Section 9.8). He can be silent in this group because he does not need to do otherwise to influence and engage with those who matter.

The council officers also position this access to resources as being at the core of the power relationship, which has meant they have to sit back and wait (see Nina and Paul's comments in Chapter 6 and Chapter 9 respectively). In this respect, it is the research agenda's language of co-inquiry that is attributed some centripetal, commanding force in this project. The council language, of constraints and scrutiny, carries much less persuasive power in these project conversations. Nina is unsuccessful in using it to create the outcomes she may want. Sean has been able to keep Nina and the other council officers from being directly involved in the university team's research work. Nevertheless, this has emerged through some help from Alison's interventions and her own use of the university language in a council setting, with the outcome that it is not Nina's difficult personality - potentially interpretable by others as simply Sean's personal dislike of her - but her organisational affiliation that becomes a key constraint. Yet one of the outcomes of this seems to be that the language of co-inquiry and creativity and the language of consultation and constraints are never fully brought together, never fully resolved and combined. Instead there is always a power struggle between them rather than a merging into a new discourse.

Nina's descriptions of her silence, in contrast to Sean's descriptions of his, encompass a far more passive form of power, as she waits for the opportunity to

drive forward the project work again at a future point. It is futile to speak up in the project meetings at the moment, she suggests. However, with the help of Martin, her long-term ally who has been incorporated into the university research team, she has some kind of access to a social arena from which she is physically barred. Both she and Martin provide discursive descriptions of the importance ultimately of the greenspace site's development, in a way that does not emerge in the discourse of other participants. She can take advantage of his voice in the community talks, through which to talk to the general public audience, and she does not need to battle with Sean directly.

It may be possible to theorise that Nina, through staying silent, is able to put up some resistance to, and be emancipated from, Sean's limiting depiction of her. However, the descriptions of her silence never seem fully to be ones of resistance or emancipation: see, for instance, the extracts in Section 9.6 where she notes there is 'no point in raking over everything', but that there are still difficulties of not having been more involved. I contend that this is because it is only partially Sean who is implicated as a constraint on her action. There are voices much further away from the immediate project group conversations that are depicted by her as far more important and problematic: the Manor House owners, City councillors, and so on. Inasmuch as the university's language of co-inquiry, and its logical consequences for action, are accepted and absorbed by the two sets of council managers and by these other influential stakeholders, Nina may be able to use such resources in the future to influence them. The absorption and subsequent availability of this discourse depends at least partially on how successful Sean and Alison are in creating an acceptance and incorporation of the new values and ways of working that come with this language of co-inquiry.

It is important to note, however, that it is difficult to judge the extent to which it is appropriate for me to talk of a *purposive* and *conscious* manipulation of others' voices as a means of influence in this project, because it is an inference that I make from the data rather than being a topic that is openly discussed with me by Nina or Sean. Nor is the idea of a heteroglossic turf war about how to deliver the various long-term priorities - for Sean with the research funders, and for Nina with the political stakeholders - ever explicitly discussed with me. It may be worthwhile dwelling a little on this point, since it points to some interesting silences in my interview data. The development of Storyline 3 and its implications depends more than the other two storylines on my situated interpretation of participants' intentions, including the significance and meaning of what they do *not* say openly. Perhaps the silences in the data come from the *hidden* nature of individual agendas which Kerry noted in Section 9.7? Or perhaps from participants' use of a Storyline 3 positioning in conversation with me? It may be that the explicit construction of a conscious, instrumental use of other people in this voice-appropriative way, in what might be interpreted to be self-interested manipulation, clashes with a Storyline 1 perspective, where people are positioned as friends, and with the sense of local authority solidarity and collegiality that Storyline 2 presupposes between council officers. The discursive resource of Storyline 3 perhaps becomes problematic when someone is meant to be collaborating with friends and colleagues! Instead, what tends to be used in conversation with me are Storyline 1-type references to the personal characteristics of the other, which hint that this other is unlikely to be the kind of person to whom it is sensible to reveal such personal wishes and hidden agendas.

Now that I have elaborated the three storylines, in the following sections I draw out some final theoretical and practical points that emerge from them.

10.4 Storyline narratives of good workers delivering complex work

There is a huge variety of ways in which silence was given evaluative expression in participants' accounts over the duration of this project. It was sometimes described as difficult, sometimes as positive.⁶² Despite the range of evaluative terms, participants' accounts offer far more advantageous than disadvantageous aspects to silence as a practice, as well as a focus on the positive beneficial outcomes ultimately of staying silent.

There is of course a question about the extent to which impression management and Argyris' (1994) notion of defensive routines account for this positive orientation: after all, I take these accounts as situated social action rather than as truth claims. Nevertheless, I suggest that this orientation provides an important counterweight to the often more negative descriptions of silence that appear in the OB literature, and that start from the perspective of silence being produced by feelings of fear (Kish-Gephart et al., 2011; Ryan and Oestreich, 1998) or futility (Pinder and Harlos, 2001; Van Dyne, Ang and Botero, 2003). The discourse here is not one of silence as an outcome of individuals not bothering, but as a product of attention and care being paid to project work.

What seems to be a central idea in the data is that silence as a situated phenomenon is connected to simultaneously developing and sustaining a range of relationships, of different types, and over different geographies and time spans. Silence becomes positioned as a strategic communicative tool to use in order to balance the different

⁶² The range of evaluative words associated with staying silent, for instance, includes: trust, constructive, happy to let it go, not easy, not sure, uncomfortable, letting go, like pushing the bird out of the nest, getting myself through this, and no point in raking over things.

conflicting requirements that are both imposed upon the speaker by others, and that emerge from his/her own individual pursuits, interests and concerns.

The work that is done in individuals' accounts of their silence might be compared to the efforts of describing the 'invisible' work described by Goffman (1959, p.41ff).

Goffman cites instances where practitioners need to make adequate *visible*

dramatization of their work in order to meet the expectations of those who view

them: the work being done might otherwise not be given due merit.⁶³ Participants

responding to my questions seek to show me how they were engaging in reasonable

activity given their version of the circumstances of the meeting: the work of staying

silent might be invisible to others but is felt keenly by the participant him/herself.

This work provides the participant with identity resources of being a particular type

of silent person, and can help negotiate the function of attributing motives to silence.

Very briefly, the different storyline resources allow participants in their individual

accounts of silence to move between positioning:

- in storyline 1, as someone who is socially sensitive and adaptive, and caring about others and their welfare;
- in storyline 2, as someone acting on a higher authority rather than personal interest (particularly if s/he does not get on well with someone else);
- and in storyline 3, as someone who has a reason for doing what they are doing, (particularly if s/he might be interpreted as carrying out orders for the sake of it, without some personal responsibility).

⁶³ Goffman gives the example of a nurse standing by a hospital bedside: the nurse may be checking the patient's breathing or skin tone but unless s/he makes visible this work that is being done while standing, it may be perceived by those who are witness to her/his actions that s/he is just idling.

Some of the difficulty here seems to lie in the possibility of ambiguity between the crossover points between Storylines 2 and 3: individuals with particular organisational responsibilities or duties might be interpreted as pursuing other interests than those which have been formally set for delivery. It is difficult to know whether Nina, for instance, is wanting to progress the project in a certain way because that was what she personally wanted, or because that was how she was interpreting her job function, or perhaps even because that was what her line manager had explicitly requested of her as part of the County Council's programme of work. It is difficult to tell inasmuch as the stakeholders to be influenced are the line managers and others setting the goals to be delivered.

There is certainly some autonomy of action within participants' descriptions of their communicative practice, their choices between speaking up and staying silent, and in judgements about action in response to ongoing circumstances. Yet this autonomy is also portrayed as limited and circumscribed by others' responses and actions, not just by those who are physically present in the conversation, but also by those elsewhere whose influence will be felt at a later point. Participants talked about how communication in one setting had consequences in another; and thus, how silence at one moment was prudent in relation to these wider consequences. In this inter-organisational setting, much longer chains of relationships and consequences were emphasised. Choices between speaking up or staying silent can be conceptualised, therefore, not simply as dependent on one moment within a conversation in the immediate group. The more complex processes by which issues or problems are raised across time and space are highlighted.

10.5 Implications for practice

Social theory applied to empirical data, of course, is often shown to be too simplistic given the myriad details and intricacies of social situations, and I acknowledge that the storylines here too might be seen as reductivist. Nevertheless, as 'practical theory' (Cunliffe, 2002) or 'actionable knowledge' (Shotter, 2004) I suggest that they also provide insights into the social significance of silence in inter-organisational project work in the UK, and in addition may be of practical use in other situations. For example, during fieldwork I recognised that there were times when I did not ask questions that directly challenged participants' accounts, even when I thought there may be something more to the story than someone was telling me: I myself engaged in face-saving routines. As I was analysing the data and developing the storylines, I found it useful to apply the three storylines to test my own positioning as a research student in ongoing conversations, to reflect upon my own rationale for silence in a given moment of social interplay, to inquire further about whether it might have been (or might still be) worth speaking up instead, to ask the question that might break the frame and challenge the story being told.

I suggest that the storylines that have been developed from this project may be of practical use in other social situations for two specific reasons. Firstly, my analysis relied on the application of social categories, and their concomitant relational obligations, which were not simply unique and localised within this one project. These same categories, relationships and obligations may also be recognised in other situations, and may be instructive for other people in reflecting upon their own practice, or particular choices, of withholding. Secondly, the storylines provide a potential resource by which conversations about silence may be facilitated without the need to frame them in terms of risk or of silence necessarily being a negative

phenomenon. This may be a useful resource for project managers or line managers who want to initiate conversations about what colleagues or subordinates may be reluctant to raise under their own volition without prompt. The storylines here are developed from participants' *talk* about their own silence, what it was that they were willing to share about their withholding, and silence is by no means positioned always as a bad option. Using the language that these storylines provide - a language based on considerations of appropriateness and relational care, and discursive positioning resources of being a good professional worker caught within organising processes - may be a more appealing invitational starting point for conversation and self-reflection than a language based on psychological safety or efficacy, and a positioning of someone as possibly too cowardly to speak up.

10.6 A short summary for Research Question 1

The main implication of the discursive data generated in this study is that a myriad of different relationships are suggested as sustained, managed and developed through silence: it is this patterning and this social significance that emerges. Silence becomes constructed both as an outcome and an input into the ongoing process of social relations. It is a measure of appropriateness, rather than risk, that tends to be used in these accounts of individual practice.

All the storylines contain a range of discursive positions that have some implication for the understanding of communication and communicative practice. It is these positions that are drawn upon by participants in fragmentary and fleeting form, and used as a resource to construct a socially understandable and acceptable answer to my questions about their silence. Silence is constructed as a relational product from these fleeting acts of positioning. The positions do not determine the decision either

to speak up or stay silent. Instead, the work of positioning serves to explicate and evaluate the choice of silence (or voice).

However, the question then arises: what exactly is this phenomenon of silence? As I have stated previously, my initial interest was in the idea of withholding, and yet in our post-meeting conversations participants rarely defined discrete acts of withholding. I turn to this issue in the next chapter, to explore some of the different forms of silence that emerged in the data, and to suggest some tentative proposals for how using a dialogic model of communication may help the understanding of silence in organising processes.

11 DISCUSSION - SILENCE IN DIALOGIC DISCOURSE

In this chapter, I move beyond the discursive accounts of silence and take a second-order 'radically reflexive' (Cunliffe, 2003) view of the ethnographic data in order to address the second research question: what are the implications of using a dialogic model of communication within an ethnographic study for the theoretical understanding of silence in organising processes? In some ways, as discussed in Chapter 1, this chapter is an incidental one which developed from the process of trying to understand silence in a situated, time-bound context and encountering something different to what was described in the OB literature.

To recap: initially during the fieldwork period, how people were constructing their accounts of silence was the cause of some anxiety for me, as I grappled with ways to encourage participants to speak to me more precisely about *withholding* rather than what seemed to be other conceptual understandings of silence. What was gradually highlighted was how the interpretation of the variety of forms of silence that participants were constructing helped to put the idea of conscious withholding into perspective. As soon as the theoretical framework applied to the investigation of silence is changed from a cognitive psychological focus on the discrete individual to a dialogic one, which allows for social interactional processes that encompass the hearer and other actors over a period of time, two things happen. Firstly, the autonomous agent becomes less clearly depicted and becomes constrained and defined by other actors (an issue picked up in the previous chapter). Secondly, voice can be interpreted as existing at the same time as silence. In any one moment of social interplay, there may be not only multiple meanings in what is said (many different speech acts, depending on the perlocutionary force interpreted by the

different hearers) but also multiple forms of silence, which operate as slightly different and separate phenomena: thematic silences, discrete acts of withholding, normative understandings about what should not be discussed in this social setting, and so on.

In this chapter then, I discuss what seem to me to be two implications for the theoretical conceptualisation of silence in organising, which have emerged from the use of a dialogic model of communication in my research:

- that it might be useful conceptually to distinguish an act of withholding as a situated, temporally-specific, consciously suppressed utterance as a particular form of silence; and
- that such a distinction of an act of withholding can be contrasted with other forms of silence in a way that may help to illuminate the ongoing debates in the OB field, about how silence (withholding) is generated, and about the relationship between silence and voice.

To start this discussion, I elaborate two forms of silence that were discursively constructed by participants in their post-meeting conversations with me. I then offer an additional two forms of silence that emerged from my analysis of the processes of social interaction in the project. It is fundamentally the distinction between these four forms of silence that was facilitated by using a dialogic model of communication in ethnographic research. After setting out these four forms, I turn to the implications as outlined in the bullet points above. I end the chapter by providing a short summary and concluding comments relating to my second research question.

11.1 Four forms of silence

11.1.1 Silence as a discrete act of withholding

My research had started off with the anticipation of exploring what participants claimed that they had *not* said, as a discrete topic that they had not raised, at a particular point in the project or in a particular meeting. The number of entries that emerged from the data analysis against the code for such temporally-specific *acts of withholding* - defined strictly as participants' descriptions of their own withholding of some thought (concern, suggestion, etc) that might have been shared with other project participants at a specific time but were not - is small. There are 13 entries in total from six months of data, and these include my own withheld thoughts that I recorded in fieldnotes. Of course, the shortness of the list is affected by my coding strategy.⁶⁴ However, the main point I want to make is that my research did not generate huge quantities of data about participants talking lucidly about their own silence in the form of consciously withholding thoughts on significant and substantive matters that would have changed how the project was delivered. It is not consciously-crafted, latent utterances awaiting expression that are offered to me in the post-meeting conversations. Even I (as someone who might be considered as having the greatest vested interest in the research) did not compile a long list of clearly defined withheld thoughts at any point.

Where a temporally-specified act of withholding was defined, it tended to be described as contingent upon a trigger in the social interplay as a *responsive* gesture

⁶⁴ I do not include in this list examples where project group members did not construct their silence as having occurred within the meeting (such as Alison's comments in Chapter 8 about wanting to keep the process open, where she clearly stated that it was after the meeting that she had thought this) or where the action of withholding is not quite clear (such as in Paul's comments about rephrasing his language in Chapter 8 to avoid embarrassing Alison, where the silence related to rephrasing and sensitivity about word choices rather than not speaking up at all).

to some other previous action, rather than as an *anticipatory* gesture of illocutionary force. The starting point for the conversation was often a moment in the meeting in which the project group member had noticed something, what someone else had said, an interpretation or judgment of what others were doing that had implications for the speaker's own communication. What I personally recall withholding are all thoughts at moments that seemed somehow difficult and sensitive to manage.⁶⁵ The questions of why *that* withholding at *that* moment becomes a matter of conversational content, but also of relational context as discussed in Chapter 10.

None of the identified acts of withholding in this study is necessarily very significant as a stand-alone issue when taken out of the context of the conversation. It is actually quite hard to judge how many of these are improvement- or change-oriented (that is, an opposite of a common OB conceptualisation of voice), or how many are even definitively about project delivery at all. Only a few might be interpreted emphatically as referring to content that would have affected how the project was delivered. Examples in this category might be Kerry's withheld concern about how to select participants for a workshop (Chapter 7), and Sean's withheld idea that he could run further workshops with the council (Chapter 9). There are other more ambiguous examples that could be argued as related - or perhaps not - to project delivery, for instance, Kerry's unease about the decision not to allow Nina to attend the workshop (Chapter 7). Would these propositions, if uttered, be equated to 'voice' defined in line with Morrison (2011), as the communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, or opinions about work-related issues with the intention of improvement? Other examples might be perceived more clearly as *not* directly affecting the

⁶⁵ My list includes the following: I avoided a response to what I heard as an enquiry from Paul about whether Sean felt he should have said what he did about the posters (Chapter 4). I did not ask Alison further questions about her involvement in authorising the posters, or seek to continue the conversation with Nina about the argument about the posters (Chapter 8).

substantive project delivery, for instance, the personal evaluative nature of Sean's withholding of the 'truly awful' nature of the poster in Chapter 8. (It is certainly an opinion, but is it 'voice'?)

Of course, it could be argued that the shortage of descriptions of withholding that would be pertinent to an OB category of voice is a methodological failing: my sample participants were just not discussing the 'right type'⁶⁶ of withholding, that is, when people do have some thought - concern, opinion, suggestion - that they wish to convey. To some extent I would concur, since my research interest was in something slightly different. I was investigating the social processes that were unfolding *before* and *as* withholding becomes pertinent, rather than after such formation has happened. Despite this, the analysis here might be helpful as a comparison to the OB literature, and might serve as empirical illustration of Detert, Burris and Harris' (2010) 'myth-busting' approach to silence where employees' more mundane stories were offered. One of the important points from the empirical examples generated in my study is that they seem to indicate what might be obvious from a common-sense perspective: that withholding as a phenomenon has no inherent negative quality, and may actually serve some very good social purposes. My data supports Knoll and Dick's (2013) suggestion that withholding is given good or bad evaluation depending on whether the person felt the utterance should have been said or not.

The examples here do, however, raise an interesting issue of what counts as silence, and how to *discount* it when it is no longer a relevant description to apply.

Sometimes the acts of withholding have an end-point and the content no longer

⁶⁶ I appropriate and modify what was attributed to be British Rail's excuse in 1991 for the lateness of trains being due to the 'wrong type of snow' on the line.

applies (see for instance Kerry's comments in Section 7.2, when she stated that she no longer thought that Nina should have been invited to the workshop). Sometimes the potential act to speak up instead of staying silent is not yet redundant (in the same section, Kerry noted that she was still not sure about the invitations to the workshop; maybe this would be something she would still raise at some point.) What becomes raised is the issue of temporality: I discuss this further in the next section.

11.1.2 Silence as a state

Following on from the point above, about the relative rarity of constructions of *specific acts* of withholding, a more common answer to my questions about silence was a construction in participants' discourse more akin to a *state of being* silent, rather than a *doing* activity of withholding: a generalised *non-doing* or absence of action, rather than a specific moment of conscious and active *withholding* of some specific thought content. For instance, the council officers at the beginning of my research offer me accounts of staying silent as 'sitting back and waiting', in Paul's words. Kerry and Sean construct something similar in Chapter 9 when the project delivery is being transferred over to the local authorities, and Kerry notes that the project becomes the councils' 'baby' now. The silence becomes equated with a non-participation or disengagement, which influences participants' conduct and orientation to each other, and is more a commentary on the relationships involved within the social interaction than on the substantive communication per se.

These relational state-like descriptions of silence are made relevant at certain times: with particular people (for instance, for Nina with respect to Sean) and in particular situations (for instance, in this project but not in others for the council officers).

Sometimes, as elaborated within Storyline 2 in the previous chapter, the discursive construction of the requirement to stay silent changes at particular points, such as in the conversations with Alison and Paul in Chapter 9, when they start to become responsible for the project work again. The evaluative aspects given by participants vary enormously across different accounts at different points in the project. Nina's talk in Chapter 6 constructs a state in which she has given up trying to engage with Sean, based on her sense of futility and his disinterest in working with her (Section 6.3.1). Alison in the same chapter (Section 6.3.1) describes a state of non-participation as one based on trust.

It would not make sense to define what participants are describing here as somehow a constant state of *withholding*. The description relates more to the social conditions in which certain communicative expectations and behavioural performances (Goffman, 1959) are defined. The significant point seems to be that a state of silence is discursively constructed to illustrate the state of trust, futility, disengagement, and so on (Billig, 2001/1997). It would also be misleading to define these state-like discursive constructions as *passive* behaviour (Van Dyne, Ang and Botero, 2003), since the discourse is not - or at least, not always - of passivity but more of appropriate behavioural conduct, either in terms of a general understanding of how to act at this stage of project delivery, or as learnt behaviour which applies to this particular project and set of relationships. Participants do not need to be thoughtful about the *substantive* issues in this part of the process, but they do need to be thoughtful in relation to *whether they should be active or not!* This is similar to Brown and Coupland's (2005) discussion of the organisational norms constructed by graduate trainees that constrain what they can say to whom and when. As Brown

and Coupland note, the issue is not about speaking up so much as speaking out of line (2005, p.1005).

These state-like constructions are interesting to compare to the literature on climates of silence and voice (Morrison and Milliken, 2000; Morrison, Wheeler-Smith and Kamdar, 2011; Vakola and Bouradas, 2005) in which collective sensemaking about previous interactions and the idea of shared beliefs is suggested as influencing employees' *perceptions* about the safety and efficacy of speaking up, and thus their *behaviour* of staying silent. In the data here, however, something slightly different is happening in that the relational state is being described *as* the practice of silence rather than as a prelude to withholding. It is not that these states are prior or consequential to withholding but that they are a different form of silence altogether.

Importantly, this state-like form of silence often seems to negate Gruman and Saks' (2014) idea of voice engagement, defined as the extent of effort that participants employ in speaking up, because, as Paul and Kerry both argue (Section 6.2 and Section 9.3 respectively), they do not need - indeed, should not attempt - to be involved. My questions about withholding were essentially made irrelevant: participants positioned themselves as not needing to *withhold*, since they did not even need to start to *engage* in the first place. The inference is that there is no activation of the dialogic internal thought processes that might lead to withholding, since there is no explicit attention to the flow of outer discourse (Larrain and Haye, 2012a) by means of which such thoughts might be provoked.

These discursive constructions of silence, as a particular act of communicative withholding and as a relational state, suggest some interesting questions for the OB literature, not only about the relationship between the act and the state, and the social

process that leads to withholding (an issue I return to in Section 11.1.4), but also about when a description of silence is even pertinent to apply. For instance, of course an employee could write an email to communicate a new idea or suggestion; or go and knock on a manager's door to have a conversation; or mention something to a colleague over lunch, and so on; but at what point in the flow of social interaction does the *non-doing* of these activities become meaningful, as a description of someone *being silent* - or even more tenuously, as someone consciously *withholding* - rather than as someone simply doing something else with his/her time? Is all the time spent not writing that email or not knocking on the manager's door (etc) to be considered as a state of employee silence?

I come back to consider these issues shortly, but firstly I introduce two other forms of silence which emerge not from participants' discourse but from my reflexive analysis of ethnographic data. The forms of silences here become a matter of communicative interpretation, and of pinpointing the meaning of an utterance said by someone in a specific moment in time. Mazzei (2003) points out that such interpretations turn the gaze as much onto the Self as the Other, by implicating the process by which such interpretation is made.

11.1.3 Interpreted withholding

The first of these reflexive forms of silence occurred when I inferred what Morison and Macleod (2014) call a 'veiled silence' within the social interaction. These inferences were generated by my anticipation of a response based on my prior relationship with someone and, to paraphrase Shotter's (2008) words discussed in Chapter 3 (page 68), my expectation of what this kind of person, in this kind of situation, would say. For example, I was anticipating - as apparently was Sean - that

Nina would protest about being excluded from the workshop (Chapter 7): I identified what I inferred as her silence, since during the first conversation about the workshop she did not act as I had anticipated.

In the final set of post-meeting conversations, I included questions about what I thought participants *might* have been withholding based on such inferences.

Sometimes participants agreed with my line of questioning about particular acts of withholding - for instance, when I asked Nina about her dissatisfaction with the change of deadline for the report, she responded that there was indeed something she could have said but did not (Section 9.9). However, sometimes participants denied that they had been withholding and my interpretation was challenged: Kerry dismissed my suggestion that she may have wanted to comment further about how the council take forward the work (Section 9.3).

These different outcomes highlight what Mazzei (2003) notes as one of the difficulties of interpreting a muffled subtext: the tendency to force what is unsaid to mean what the interpreter wants it to. There is, as she points out, always some element of unintelligibility and lack of clarity about what people do not say. It is an issue highlighted in Section 7.5.2, where Kerry offered an interpretation of Nina that was at odds with Nina's description; and again in a somewhat different way in Chapter 8, where Sean's description of his own withholding remains unrecognised and uncredited by Paul (Section 8.4.3). In both cases, a different effect is produced, in that other participants interpret a different perlocutionary force than that which the participants claim to have intended. Moreover, Paul's descriptions in that same chapter (Section 8.4) of how he consciously modified his words and shaped his utterances to lessen the likelihood of them being interpreted in a particular way, highlights some of the difficulties, in such inter-personal interpretations, of judging

whether (and when) a reading between the lines (Poland and Pederson, 1998) is required or justified.

What these issues point out is the very different interpretation of other individuals' motives that can be generated, and how perlocution becomes an important matter in (contested) issues of silence and voice.

11.1.4 Unheard voice

There were other silences - *silencings* - that occurred due to the situated perlocutionary force in the conversation. This 'unheard' voice is in some ways the reverse of the interpreted withholding just described in the previous section: a non-recognition of what someone might have been intending to mean by their utterance. This unheard voice is a form of silence that I both felt the effects of and for which I was responsible. Firstly, my illocutionary act sometimes failed to evoke the required response in conversation. My questions were subverted; sometimes I did not quite get the type of answer that I had wanted from participants. I do not know if such silencing was deliberate and intended by a participant (was my question felt to be inappropriate; would it have required an answer that someone was not prepared to provide?) or if it arose from a simple misunderstanding of what I was after.⁶⁷

Moreover, I noted my own unintentional involvement in silencing others' possible meaning, as I realised later, through my reflexive recollection of the interaction, the follow-up question that I should have asked, or the response I should have given,

⁶⁷ There are certainly examples in the data where participants' meanings might be analysed as deliberately unheard, such as Nina's request to attend the workshop. Sean had already talked about how he had anticipated such a response, and it is possible to trace how his utterances close down her request in the conversation in the meeting (page 173). It is a pattern of interaction between them that he quite explicitly discussed with me, as he sought to keep her away from the university research team discussions.

which with hindsight might have been more sensitive, pertinent and insightful. Within the moment of conversation, however, I was caught up in other attentional matters and the pursuit of my own goals, only later noticing the potential significance of alternative readings of an utterance. This was not a conscious and deliberately chosen path. Instead, it 'became' (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002) the path taken on the basis of the understanding which was developing in the hurried moment of conversation, as I was trying to make the best use of the interview time available with participants, and this path had consequences. I express one concrete locutionary form of words (out of the many utterances that I could have expressed), and it is this utterance to which my interlocutor subsequently responds. One set of words thus become fixed in the transcript, and my interpretation of participants' motives and characters are developed from the accumulation of such moments of social interaction. I came to know the project group participants, and what were sensitive topics to raise, how I should behave and what I should withhold, through this process of social interaction over time. Other possible ways of coming to know them thus did not develop.

11.2 The implications for the theoretical understanding of silence in organising processes

Now that I have introduced these four forms of silence, I turn to the implications for the theoretical understanding of silence in organising processes. I propose that it is a useful exercise to distinguish an act of withholding, as a consciously-enacted, temporally-specific suppression of some utterance, as a particular social act and a particular form of silence since this may help to develop the theoretical debates in the organisational and management literature. There are two specific reasons for this proposal which I develop in the two sections below.

11.2.1 A situated approach to silence as withholding

The first reason that I suggest it is worthwhile to conceptualise an act of withholding is that, if research is aiming to find ways to encourage employees to speak up instead of staying silent,⁶⁸ then it is useful to analyse the actual moment of choosing between speaking up or staying silent more clearly. Such a move might help develop further the thinking around the idea of *antecedents* to silence and voice, and what influences such choices. The relevance of the empirical data in this thesis is that they prompt queries about the relationship between an act of withholding and some of the antecedent variables that have been identified so far in the OB literature on silence and voice. In this study, some of the participants discursively constructed their silence as an ongoing state (a non-engagement or uninvolvedness), as well as talking very specifically about their own act of withholding, while also demonstrably speaking up within project meetings:⁶⁹ see, for instance, Sean's interactions towards the end of the project (Section 9.3) or Nina's interactions about attending the workshop (Section 7.4). This lack of connection is reflected in Detert, Burris and Harrison (2010) and Detert and Edmondson's (2011) empirical research, where they note differences between what people say they do and what they seem to do. It is not at all clear that the antecedent variables identified in the OB literature so far - such as a sense of commitment or loyalty to the organisation, the social sharing of sensemaking that speaking up is futile or risky, and so on - are particularly useful in causally predicting silence, in the empirical form of conscious acts of withholding as they might occur in social interaction. By distinguishing an act of withholding as a

⁶⁸ I am not assuming that such an aim is always the case.

⁶⁹ I acknowledge that I am using an approach to discourse that does not assume a truth value to what participants say: however, as a response to more positivist research designs that use participants' self-reports about their behaviour, I suggest this point is valid to offer for further consideration.

first step for further investigation, a more robust process model may be developed in future of how withholding is generated, and how acts of withholding are transformed into voiced speech acts.

In this regard, I return to the more phenomenologically-oriented and context-specific conceptualisation of silence in Pinder and Harlos' (2001) paper, and their argument that silence is not a *constant* state of withholding but becomes consciously engaged with, at certain points in time, as a dynamic process, and that it is multi-dimensional. I suggest that an act of withholding becomes meaningfully defined as a description of individual action in relation to a choice about whether to speak up or not at certain points in social interaction, when a proposition becomes possible to formulate in communication in some mode.⁷⁰ Outside of these social conditions, it may make little sense to talk about silence as an act of *withholding*.

While the scope of this thesis does not permit an in-depth analysis or modelling of the processes by which acts of withholding might be generated, some tentative first thoughts from the data here do suggest that it may be helpful to consider a conscious act of withholding as an outcome of a specific moment of social interplay in which certain potential for meaning-making is available. A research perspective that notes the sequentialities in social interplay, of certain propositions following previous utterances, an idea central to conversation analysis (CA) as noted in Chapter 2, brings attention to the idea of situational affordances (Erickson, 2004). An attention to situational affordances may have positive implications for attempts to encourage employees to speak up, since it might notice how small changes can produce effects. Such a focus can help to illuminate issues such as Edmondson's (2003) identification

⁷⁰ These points might be, for instance, someone else mentioning a topic after which a further utterance becomes sensible to offer, or when a particular configuration of people are present as an audience at a particular moment.

of how changes in leaders' behaviour can influence team members' communication during clinical operations, since new forms of dialogue become possible (Tsoukas, 2009). A quiescent silence, as an individual's latent sense of some issue that should be addressed, can now be framed in relation to potential opportunities for this silence to be broken and transformed into an act of voice when a raising of a relevant proposition (suggestion, concern, idea) becomes sequentially sensible and possible. For instance, both Paul and Nina's suggestions in Chapter 7, that a council representative attend the university's workshop, can be understood as a product of a particular moment in the project group meetings.

However, a dialogic model of communication does not entail solely a CA perspective, and there may also be more difficult implications for encouraging employees to speak up. For instance, a Bakhtinian concept of withholding may be considered to involve not only expressive aspects but also emotional and relational dimensions, in the same way as for voiced utterances, and the implications of the influence of other voices needs to be taken into account. A particular act of communication may make sense in relation to the affordances of the moment but cannot be read purely within the moment. The ongoing relationships between the participant and other project members in the meeting, and with other people and characters such as stakeholders in wider processes become relevant and enacted within the moment as an embodied presence. Changing a person's particular interpretation of the other may take a good deal longer, and it is here that the research on organisational norms and collective sensemaking becomes pertinent. Conceptualising an act of withholding, in this sense, shows the other social influences in operation.

11.2.2 The relationship between silence and voice

The second reason why the idea of an act of withholding may be useful is to develop the discussion about the relationship between silence and voice. Chapter 2 addressed the issue of whether staying silent was a simple opposite of speaking up. I argue here that the answer to this very much depends on the conceptual and analytic framework being used. Some of the confusion about the relationship between silence and voice may have arisen because there has been very little explicit discussion about the ontological nature of silence. What seems to have happened is that the idea of actors' *motivations* for speaking up or staying silent has gained prominence in the OB literature recently, and the phenomenon of silence embedded within social interaction - a more situated perspective which Pinder and Harlos (2001) had started to develop - has become rather ignored. This might have led to a lack of clarification about what the phenomenon is that is being talked about, and thus how it might relate to voice. The silence might be a conscious withholding of an utterance at a precise moment; or it might very well not be a conscious and/or discrete action at all.

To illustrate the difficulty of focusing too specifically on individual motivations, the examples that Van Dyne, Ang and Botero (2003) provide for the different types of silence (as discussed in Chapter 2) might be useful to return to. By doing this, I do not mean that Van Dyne, Ang and Botero's examples are somehow problematic, but that the exercise of contrasting them as acts of withholding with other potential forms of social action might be productive. For instance, an acquiescent silence of not getting involved 'because employees believe they don't make a difference' (Van Dyne, Ang and Botero, 2003, p.1366) might possibly be a very different phenomenon from the defensive silence of 'omitting facts about problems that should

be corrected' (p.1367) or the prosocial silence of 'not breaking confidences' (p.1368) in terms of the temporality of the action that constitutes silence, and in terms of the nature of the social interaction which is occurring at the time. All three of these examples *may* involve someone consciously withholding a thought within face to face communication. However, there are also other (and possibly more frequently occurring) activities to which such descriptions might be applied, rather than as a momentary communicative act. The first example may involve an act of absenteeism, not even turning up to a discussion, because employees do not feel they will make a difference, and so they choose to do something else instead. The second, of defensive silence, may involve a non-doing of not contributing additional information to someone else's report. The last example, of prosocial silence, may involve not proactively seeking to raise a topic in a face to face conversation where another topic is being discussed. All of these may be conceptualised as silence in some way, but they are quite different social actions; and all these different actions are likely to have different ways of being addressed if a manager wishes to change the practices involved. Such multiple possibilities for the meaning of silence are useful to bear in mind when considering the conceptual relationship between silence and voice. What, for instance, might be the opposite of a 'prosocial' silence of non-reporting of a colleague's transgression? It might be a *reporting* of the transgression, but is not necessarily so. It might be a shift in the feeling of prosociality towards the colleague; it might be a disengagement from that relationship, and so on. What precisely is the focus of investigation can soon become rather lost.

In a transmission model of communication, as a discrete communicative act consciously taken by an individual, a clear dichotomy may be envisaged: I either speak up or stay silent. It might be possible, therefore, to argue that speaking up or

staying silent is a simple binary opposite when referring to the psychological cognitive processes of a conscious agentic decision in a particular moment.

However, the binary opposition of voice and silence soon collapses when the meaning of the word *silence* becomes looser and more expansive, and as a dialogic model of communication brings into play other aspects of social interaction. Indeed, it could be argued that an *act of speaking up* does not even necessarily break an *act of withholding* except in the one very specific, cognitive psychological reading of silence just noted above: as an individual and conscious decision between silence and voice. For instance, as I respond to the talk of a person with whom I am engaged in conversation, it might be that the other's silence is not broken by his/her conscious decision (and subsequent act) to speak up rather than to withhold, *unless* the illocutionary force of his/her utterance is recognised by me, and I successfully hear the point that is being made. Unless speaking up receives the perlocutionary response that the speaker meant it to, the utterance may remain as a de facto silence in the social interaction, in the category of unheard voice.⁷¹

A relationship between the two constructs of silence and voice, then, in which speaking up is the binary opposite of staying silent, needs some match between illocution and perlocution for a particular speech act to have applied. While the opposite of a conscious act of withholding may be to speak up (albeit with the caveat just noted above), the opposite of an understanding of silence defined in terms of a

⁷¹ While there is no scope in this thesis to do so, the core concept of voice in the OB literature also, of course, is questioned, with the issue becoming instead one of how different speech acts and intentions can be heard from the same utterance. Research that has taken an objectivist approach to voice seems to have some limitations when applied analytically in empirical social situations in which the embedded meaning of language is emergent and changeable over time. How, for instance, would one categorise Nina's speaking up about the topic of attending the university's workshop (Section 7.4)? Is this improvement-oriented talk? One possible interpretation is that Nina meant it to be so, that she wanted to learn from the event in order to take forward the principles of collaborative inquiry in their later council work. However, Sean seemed to hear her talk as meddlesome and inappropriate.

more enduring state, where there is less clarity about the timescale over which the silence is enacted and less agentic definition of its provenance, is difficult to conceptualise in the same binary way. The relationship, therefore, very much depends on the definition of silence and of voice that is being used.

11.3 A short summary for Research Question 2

A dialogic model of communication has contributed to the theoretical understanding of silence in this ethnographic study by raising the central issue in this chapter: the consideration of how silence might be identified and defined as a social act.

Through using such a model, I have highlighted four different forms of silence which emerged in social interaction.

It should, of course, be remembered that I was not seeking to deal directly with the type of employee silence that the organisational behaviour literature usually seeks to address. I was not examining silence defined in relation to constructs of voice such as Hirschman's (1970) definition of attempts to change the status quo. My research took place in an inter-organisational setting rather than within one organisation.

Furthermore, in creating conceptual distinctions between silence as a more general term and withholding as a specific form of silence, I do not wish to undermine the principle nor the importance of investigating the types of fundamental issues that underpin the OB literature on silence - the non-reporting of wrongdoing, for instance, or the promotion of creative ways to engage a diverse range of employees in work tasks.

Despite the above caveats, however, what I am suggesting is that a greater clarity of concepts is useful, in order to pursue this investigation more effectively at a time when some researchers are emphasising the integration of different organisational

literatures on silence and voice (e.g. Brinsfield et al., 2009; Wilkinson et al., 2014b). The clarity I am seeking is about a different set of concepts than the literature has so far been concerned with: rather than between silence and voice, my concern is about the variety of forms of social action that is being investigated under the term of silence. Nevertheless, an act of speaking up about matters on which much of the previous literature on employee silence has focused must manifest itself within a particular moment of interaction. Therefore, conceptualising more clearly this moment of social interaction is of consequence, as organisational research on silence develops.

12 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Participants in the project group in this research did not tend to use a cognitive, rational model to describe their individual practice of making conscious choices about what to say, or what to stay silent about, before communicating: how they talked about their practice of silence was much more relationally responsive and emotional-volitional (Shotter, 2008). The concept of conscious withholding was not given particularly high profile in participants' conversations with me. Indeed, it was an idea that seemed often hard for people to relate to in this project setting.

Yet I think this output in itself may be of interest to organisational researchers, since it suggests potentially a slightly different future research agenda for studying silence, and a slightly different way to pursue integration across organisational and management disciplines. Perhaps the final implication that emerged from using a dialogic model of communication is that it offers some novel implications for thinking about the consequences of silence: it was possibly not the discrete acts of withholding that were the most influential form of silence in terms of how this project developed. Of far more consequence might have been the process over time by which participants learnt about each other and came to an understanding of how they should act towards each other, and how thematic silences were generated as a result of these patterns of social interaction. If the ultimate aim of research on silence and voice is to create more effective and creative organising processes, and/or to develop more satisfied employees, then responding to the kinds of challenges presented by the other forms of silence identified in this study - thematic silence, unheard voice and so on - may be important. A concentration in current OB research on silence constructed as an illocutionary withholding of 'information,

suggestions, ideas, questions, or concerns about potentially important work' (Morrison, 2011, p.377) might be leading to other important perlocutionary issues in communication being overlooked. By providing a relational perspective where a range of different silence phenomena may be mapped onto temporal processes of social interaction, the various relationships between these phenomena, and the different research interests which they provoke, might be developed and joined up in future and might eventually connect into a wider set of organisational and management literatures.

Before elaborating some ideas about future research agendas which may move in this direction of integration, I set out what might be regarded as the limitations of my study, as well as the lessons learnt by me as a novice researcher.

12.1 Limitations of the study

My study here is exploratory and offers a rich, descriptive account of one set of social interactions that provides for further deliberation, and further comparison and contrast with other situations. However, the data on which this thesis is based was generated from ethnographic research over a period of six months with one six-member project group. It is, of course, a tiny sample. The very nature of the research topic relied on the concept of silence coming out of the data without a prior sense of what would emerge, since I could not anticipate what would be withheld nor what participants would talk to me about. I was reliant on situated, emergent circumstances to provide data for analysis. What transpired was not what I expected: the project became enacted not as a jointly owned and delivered task, but as a puzzle of how to join up two different pieces of work.

The idea of withholding as a conscious act was susceptible to such conditions, and the discursive construction of the storylines was susceptible to the precise local conditions of the project. The research has not specifically addressed - indeed, cannot identify at this exploratory stage - what may be idiosyncratic issues. The inter-organisational nature of the setting may have made a fundamental difference; there may be specific features of the university and local authority sectors that are implicated; the interplay was contingent upon the particular characters of the project group participants; and so on.

One methodological limitation was that the topic for study required a sensitive approach to the sharing of data within the participant group, which restricted my sharing of emergent analytic thoughts with participants in a way that may have been useful and appropriate if the topic had been different. As noted in the discussion about ethics (Section 4.12.2), some of the participants would be continuing to work with each other after my study had finished, and my data could have had an effect on their working relationship. This presented a limitation on the intersubjective involvement of participants in the data analysis as my research progressed, and in particular meant that I did not feed back thoughts after I had left the field to the people to whom the concepts may have had most pertinence. This was perhaps a missed opportunity for testing the tentative and emergent theoretical conceptualisations that I offer in this thesis.

12.2 Lessons learnt as a novice researcher

There were many lessons learnt - both theoretical and methodological - during the development of this research project.⁷² As I look back on fieldnotes, for example, I

⁷² The theoretical lessons have been catalogued to a large extent in the previous chapter.

see how I developed a much more rigorous and detailed approach to recording interactions and observations over the fieldwork period, with early notes now seeming meagre.

While the original research intention had been to study the phenomenon of withholding, in fact the methodology may not have worked very successfully in this respect, in terms of developing the social significance of *withholding* per se, as part of the process of delivering project work, for the reasons of emergence discussed in the previous section. What the study did do successfully, I suggest, was connect the more general idea of silence to the idea of the navigation of relationships and to embed it in everyday work processes to show the temporal qualities of different forms of silence. In this sense, I would argue that it was helpful to have started from the perspective that silence is not simply the absence of voice but a phenomenon worthy of investigation in its own right, but the study has not fully addressed what I initially set out to do.

One aspect of the research to which I feel now that I did not pay sufficient attention at the beginning of the fieldwork was the impact of language: the difference that the use of other terms, other ways of introducing the topic, might make to the answers that were offered by participants. The language I used in the post-meeting conversations was perhaps influenced too greatly by the OB literature's construction of silence as a negative phenomenon, as something that might be possibly difficult to admit to. I talked in terms of 'what you didn't say' or 'what you edited' from the conversation of the meetings, and 'whether you think the right things are being talked about in the project', rather than asking about 'what you withheld'. If I were to conduct a similar project again, audio-recording the post-meeting conversations could have helped investigate this point by providing for more intricate detail of the

conversational interplay to be available for analysis. As it was, I found, in my attempt to research the phenomenon from a more grounded and inductive perspective, that I had not fully noticed and taken into consideration right at the start of the data generation some of the discursive assumptions about silence within the literature.

12.3 Future research

This exploratory study has only scratched the surface of the many questions and issues raised by the discussions in Chapters 10 and 11. Much future work remains in order to develop an integrated approach across different disciplines for studying silence. Below I outline three particular areas for potential future research.

12.3.1 Furthering the investigation of withholding

I have only been able to explore superficially in this study the question about the conditions in which it makes sense to talk about *an act of withholding*. Neither have I in any way resolved the issue of how to describe the phenomenon of withholding nor the relationship between what I propose as acts of withholding and other forms of silence.

While Brinsfield et al. (2009) suggest that more understanding about content, target and motivation would be useful to develop in the literature on silence, I argue that this could be usefully pursued not as separate items of research, but as an integral package to understand more the nature of withholding and the moment in which withholding occurs. Research projects that prioritise the process aspects of withholding might pay attention both to short and long time periods of social interaction in this regard: firstly, by pursuing the idea of affordances in the social

moment and describing the momentary conditions which make a difference (such as pauses or sequentiality in conversation) in a similar theoretical way to that which has been done by Tsoukas (2009) for vocalised utterances for dialogic knowledge creation; secondly, by investigating how to link these moments of social interaction into the longer-term (historic and future anticipated) social interactions between the participants, and how particular local interpretations of affordances are generated.

The potential act of speaking up / withholding becomes an act *by* someone *to* someone *about* something, and this would be a productive framework through which to follow up the idea of withholding in a more embodied approach, and to develop the conceptualisation of the relationship between what I have described here as different forms of silence. I suggested in Chapter 10 that further research into the stories of individual relationships rather than group-level variables may be productive, and this may be a framework in which this might be done.

There are other qualitative methodologies that could be tried in order to examine the phenomenon of withholding in a more specifically focused study, through other forms of data elicitation than used in this study. For instance, a methodology using personal diaries as a method of data generation from a participant's perspective over a wider set of social settings and interactions, and possibly over a longer time period, may be useful, and would set up a different relational dynamic between researcher and participant than the more immediate issues of self-presentation in conversation that were generated in this study.

To address my point about language in the previous section, it may be useful to test more rigorously the differences that people attribute to activities of 'withholding', 'staying silent' and 'editing out' suggestions, opinions or concerns. This might be pursued through focus group discussions, for instance. The difference here may be

in the framing of the activity, to investigate further some of the taken-for-granted features of withholding. For instance, one suggestion⁷³ offered was that taking a tangential approach may produce an interesting segue into talking about what was withheld: asking, for instance, about what would the *ideal* meeting have looked like, and then asking about why that might not have happened, and what could have framed the discussion differently.

12.3.2 Developing the storylines: inter- versus intra-organisational work

The storylines presented here were developed within a particular setting of inter-organisational project work. It might be that the representational and pragmatic storylines described in Chapter 10 are particularly relevant in such settings, and may become much less relevant in intra-organisational settings. On the other hand, the silo effects of departmental organising and the difficulties of joining up disparate projects may have just as much relevance for research on silence *within* an organisation. A useful next step therefore, may be to test out the relevance in other settings of the storylines as they are presented here, possibly using a more action-oriented, change management focus for research.

Next steps might also consider if other types of relationships are pertinent in other situations. Whereas the organisational literature on silence and voice to date has concentrated on vertical and horizontal dimensions of the relationships involved in silence, the storylines of this inter-organisational group suggest more nuanced and complex ties and additional addressees, such as external influential stakeholders, which are implicated in individual communicative practice. Considering what other types of relationships might hold in other empirical situations, how these

⁷³ My thanks to Michael Izak for this point, at the Organisational Discourse conference, July 2014.

relationships are manifest locally, and how they are understood at a particular moment in time, may provide productive ways of understanding one's own situated choices of speaking up or staying silent.

12.3.3 Being misunderstood

There are many research questions that emerge from the distinctions made in this thesis between the various forms of silence and how the relationships between them may be theorised. However, there is one slightly different issue that stands out in particular. What my data highlights are how *differing* interpretations of each other and of the same event can be generated, and how easily what one person may interpret as a constructive challenge may be interpreted by another as unhelpful interference.

One possibility for further exploration that I felt was not possible to pursue in depth in this study is that the accounts of silence may focus on moments in the meetings where the participant felt that they might have been misunderstood or not given the response or recognition that they wished. The opportunity to discuss silence in this study allowed for a replaying and re-narrating of a scene to produce a more satisfactory outcome, as noted in Chapter 10 during the discussion of the relevance of Goffman's idea of invisible work. Kerry re-enacts her 'bravery' about speaking up about the empty shops idea. Sean re-enacts the reason why he was so angry about the posters. The accounts become acts of repair offered as a reasonable response to a question about silence.

The concept of feeling misunderstood might be a useful one to investigate in order to develop research that recognises the potential multiple interpretations of social action, and that feeds into such notions as climates of silence. In papers such as

Burris' (2012), which has a discussion of managerial responses to challenging versus supportive forms of voice, there is a growing recognition of the importance of how interpretations of others are made: Burris implicitly makes the point that perlocution matters. One of his recommendations is to train managers to respond to 'challenging' voice more favourably and less defensively. However, the data from this study suggests that this is only half the story: it may be a matter of training people to 'hear' voice in all its ambiguity in the first place, to consider whether an utterance is even meant as challenge. Harlos (2001), in her qualitative data - albeit in the very different research circumstances of investigating the deaf-ear syndrome - points similarly to the issue of people being frustrated by receiving a response other than that which they had anticipated when trying to use informal voice systems for complaints. What she notes as key is the need to feel heard, understood and valued. Certainly the data in this study tends to support the argument that the phenomenological experience of feeling misunderstood is a worthy topic for further investigation for organisational behaviour.

12.4 A final summary

I hope ultimately that this thesis contributes towards a practical theory of being involved *within* social action (Cunliffe, 2003; Shotter, 1993, 2012). If the aim of academic research is to develop theoretical perspectives that can help practitioners in the field, then I suggest that it is just as useful to find ways to understand and assess one's own involvement in communication in the moment as it is to find ways to pin down the other as a finalised character: this is the relational approach to communication at the heart of this research. Understanding the way in which we come to conclusions about others' motivations is important, and indeed a necessary

first step, if much of the material generated in the field of organisational behaviour is to be used in practice. I hope that this thesis will contribute towards an ongoing, productive dialogue across disciplines that will help generate further conceptualisations about silence both as a phenomenon of withholding as well as the other social forms offered here.

Jefferson (2001, p.203), in a discussion of Bakhtin's work, points out that The Other is more of an expert than the individual him/herself on one particular issue: how the individual *comes across to that other person*. She notes that:

'The self (subject) experiences himself [sic] and the world quite differently from the way in which he is experienced and perceived by others [...] The Other, however, has a perspective on the subject that enables him both to see the external body that constitutes the subject's vantage point on the world, and also to see that body as part of that world.'

The basic point Jefferson highlights is that while an individual may have illocutionary intentions and motives, these motives and intentions, rather than being self-evident and transparent, may be socially transformed in the *interpretations made by others*. By looking at the multiple perspectives within social interaction over time, my study contributes a perlocutionary approach to silence to show how different forms and functions of silence emerge in organising processes. I hope that this study offers some thoughts on the temporal and embodied processes of social interaction and dialogic interpretation, which may provide a framework for further research on silence.

Appendix A - Original email request seeking projects

Hi [xx]

To follow up our conversation yesterday, here is the very brief description of the type of project I'm looking for as a case study for my research. I would be really happy to talk more to anyone who may be interested in taking this forward, or who just wants to understand the work and its implications a little more. With hindsight, I'm sure I could have described the work in the attachment more clearly but I won't try and edit right now!

Please feel free to pass this on to anyone who runs projects and may be interested. I just need one more project team signed up now. There are all sorts of ways I could build in to my research plan a particular output for the project team, so that they get something out of the work as well as me – something as simple as a feedback session at the end, through to possibly doing a bit of additional research for them.

What I would just stress is this is not about evaluating how well either individuals or the team perform (*unless* that is something they specifically want to build in to their project evaluation). From my point of view, I'm interested in the *process* and people's own perceptions, rather than judging the *performance*.

Cheers

Clare

[attachment, on Open University letterhead]

Request for project participation for PhD research

My PhD research focuses on the way that people build collaborative working practice via their talk and conversations. There is considerable evidence to show that talk evolves in a complex way, and that it builds not only information and knowledge but also social relationships and networks.

I want to look specifically at how options for action get generated in project meeting discussions. We tend to think that decisions are made rationally, as the outcome of a full discussion of the evidence, and that successful decision-making is linked to the chairperson's skill at facilitating meetings so that everyone has a chance to speak. However, there may be other factors outside the chairperson's control which influence how project meeting conversations develop and result in a certain action becoming favoured over others. How do people interpret what is an appropriate choice of action to speak up about?

The following lists the *ideal characteristics of a project* for my research but I recognise that finding a project with all these characteristics may be challenging. I am fairly flexible about this and would be happy to discuss further any ideas you have for project involvement.

WILLINGNESS TO BE INVOLVED - A project manager/chair with an interest in decision-making processes, diversity, facilitation, and leadership would be ideal.

TIMING - I will need to start and finish my research some time **between July 2012 and April 2013**. The ideal project length would be between four to six months.

PROJECT CONTENT - The study is likely to be particularly interesting in projects where the issue to be addressed is complex or difficult to solve; where project teams consist of people who may have different technical backgrounds or different views on how to progress; and/or where there are significant time pressures and a way forward needs to be urgently confirmed.

TEAM SIZE - for practical purposes, the size of the project team would **be relatively small** although a working group / sub-group within a more complex or lengthy project would be suitable.

LOCATION - **not important**, although if face to face meetings are involved, it would be convenient to be located primarily in the Midlands, East of England, or South East. The Open University is also able to offer meeting venues in Milton Keynes if that is useful.

Clare Mumford
Open University Business School
Direct line: 01908 654 301
Email: clare.mumford@open.ac.uk

Appendix B - Information sheet and consent form for research participants

Research Project Information and Consent Form for Participants

Project title: Silence and voice in collaborative project team working

Principal researcher: Clare Mumford, PhD student

Project summary: My PhD research explores the social interaction of project group decision-making within meetings. How do individuals interpret what is an appropriate choice of action to speak up about within the group? How do people talk about the editing choices they make between speaking up or staying silent in a particular meeting? I want to understand more fully how individual choices interact in group working, generate particular decision-making paths, and coalesce ultimately into how project team members feel about the effectiveness of the group's work.

Role of the researcher: The purpose of my research is academic – to contribute to our understanding of the role of everyday conversations in the workplace in developing collaborative team working and action. My role is *not* to evaluate or critique your performance or behaviours. The activities I would like to undertake are: (1) to attend your group's meetings over a number of months and to record the conversations that take place so that I can analyse how the different conversational elements lead to a particular set of outcomes; (2) to talk to you individually after the meetings about your views of the conversation, your own participation in it, and how you decided what to raise. I would seek to carry out these one-to-one conversations informally at a time convenient to you at work; (3) subject to group wishes, to conduct a short group session towards the end of my research to share some preliminary thoughts and obtain your perspective and group feedback.

Role of the participant: There is nothing specific required of you other than to carry on your usual work activities and to be willing to talk to me candidly about your thoughts about the group meetings over a period of a few months. Such conversations with me would likely be only a few minutes in length and may not necessarily be after every meeting.

Ethics and confidentiality: There have been no major risks identified for participants in this research. The main ethical issue is the maintenance of information security and confidentiality. My work will comply with protocols agreed in accordance with the OU Code of Practice for Research and Ethics Principles (<http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/index.shtml>) and the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts. All video and/or audio data will be encrypted for transit and then stored on The Open University's secure servers. Every attempt will be made to anonymise data in a way that prevents the definite identification of either yourself, the group or the organisation in my analysis and research outputs. Confidentiality in conversations will be always be assumed unless you grant prior permission for me to share information. It should be noted however that I would be obliged to report any legal infractions or dishonest practice uncovered as part of this research project.

Your consent: By signing below, you express your agreement to participate in this research project and to allow me to use the resulting material as part of my academic work. You have the opportunity to withdraw from this research project at any time before I start the data collection at the group's meetings: in this case, the data collection with the group will not proceed at all.

Supervisors and contact details: If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact my supervisors in the Open University Business School:

Dr Caroline Ramsey (primary supervisor) - c.m.ramsey@open.ac.uk; 01098 654 758

Dr Richard Holti (secondary supervisor) - r.holti@open.ac.uk; 01908 653 039

Many thanks for your time. I hope the research will be fun and interesting for you as well as for me.

Clare Mumford
Open University Business School
Michael Young Building
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA
clare.mumford@open.ac.uk; 01908 654 301; mobile 07531 707 695

June 2012

Participation Agreement

I confirm I have read and understood the attached project summary, the project's purpose, and the procedures which Clare Mumford will use to comply with the ethics protocol for this research.

I agree that the information I provide can be used for educational purposes, further research and published articles, such as in academic journals. I understand that if I have any questions or concerns about this project, I can contact the researcher or her supervisors listed in this information sheet.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix C - Interview protocols

INITIAL INTRODUCTORY INTERVIEWS:

Your background

1. How would you describe your work background?
2. How would you describe your general inclination to speak up or stay silent in meetings?

Your relationship with the project

3. What is your understanding of the purpose of the project?
4. How would you describe your role in the project?

Experience of the meetings

5. What is your understanding of the purpose of the meetings (what they are aiming to do?)
6. How would you describe these meetings so far? (similarity/difference to other types of meetings; effectiveness; level of satisfaction with them)
7. How do you feel about the conversation in the meetings in contrast to the conversation around and outside of the meetings (by email, phone, or post/pre discussions)?

Relationship with others in group

8. How long have you worked with (any of) the other group participants?
9. How long have you known the other group participants? (e.g. mutual contacts, prior reputation)

EXIT INTERVIEWS:

(The first question was included since the last meeting of the project group had been cancelled, which meant that I had not met up with participants properly since the end of the project.)

1. How do you feel the handover of the project and the report went?
2. If you were writing the story of the project, what are the key moments to include? How did you feel about them?
3. Were there any moments in which you wish now that you hadn't said something? Or that someone else hadn't said something?
4. Was there anything with hindsight that you think should have been discussed that would have improved the project delivery? Or discussed earlier?
5. What ways of working helped you (individually and/or collectively) work effectively in this group?
6. Would you mind the transcripts of the meetings being submitted to a research database, for other potential research use, given proper anonymisation?

Appendix D - Transcription conventions

The markings used in the transcription were those that would help me develop a line of thinking about how people were communicating with each other and what sense I was making of their interactions. I was interested both in what people were saying - the content of the discourse - as well as the style of speaking and the structure of interactions that were taking place between the participants. The conventions used in the transcriptions therefore covered: speech (such as repairs and hesitations), non-verbal communication (exhalations, body gestures, for instance), and interactional detail (such as overlaps between speakers). There were a number of conventions also that were used for anonymisation purposes, where for instance I deleted proper nouns. The transcription conventions were drawn from Gail Jefferson's work (Hutchby and Woofitt, 1998).

SPEECH TRANSCRIPTION

Word emphasis

Where the stress on a certain word is emphasised and considered to convey a particular meaning, the relevant word is italicised.

Clare: I *really* didn't

Unclear words

Where the conversation is not clear on the recordings, a best guess at the words spoken is indicated by their enclosure in brackets with a question mark at the end.

Clare: I really (wasn't sure?) where he was

Punctuation

To encourage the reader to read the text in a way in which it was spoken, some punctuation has been added, such as commas, full stops and capital letters. Such markings are designed to show phrases that otherwise might not be clearly

comprehensible but which could reasonably be said to be understood in this punctuated way in a common-sense approach to the recordings.

Clare: You know, I was tired afterwards

NON-VERBAL TRANSCRIPTION

Pauses

In the full meeting transcripts, pauses are indicated by a series of dots in brackets. The greater the number of dots, the longer the pause. Pauses of more than one second were timed.

(.)	short pause
(..)	longer pause
(...)	pause of ~ 1 second
(3s pause)	pause of 3 second

A more precise measurement is not being included because of the length of time needed for such measurement which is considered unnecessary in this interpretive framework. The relative length of pauses is more important than a precise measurement.

Physical action

The occurrence of physical actions, including non-verbal communication is included in double brackets for activities which help to make sense of the written transcript for the reader, in particular where the activity affects the consequent conversation. Where the action is of a generalised nature, it is not attributed to anyone.

((Clare switches video-recorder on))

Alison: OK, we're being recorded ((waves at camera))

((laughter))

INTERACTIONAL DETAIL

Occurrence of overlapping speech between two (or more) speakers:

Overlapping words are shown by connection of square brackets. Overlapping words of current speaker start on separate line, with the incoming speaker's words underneath.

- A: But then I was
[going
- B: [when did you arrive

ANONYMISATION

The names of all participants, and some of the project and place names, have been altered to pseudonyms. To provide anonymity and confidentiality there are certain places in the transcript where an underlining of blank space hides a proper name or other feature in the conversation which may otherwise reveal information that could lead to the identification of the project team. Where it is necessary for the sense developing in the conversation, an italicised generic name in square brackets.

Alison: We are going to present this at [*name of neighbouring town*]

DELETIONS

In the use of extracts from the meeting transcripts within the main body of the thesis, I have sometimes deleted my own interjections where they did not add or seem to change the flow of talk (e.g. 'Yeah' or 'I see'). Where I have deleted other wording within the main text of participants' talk, this is indicated by [...] and has been done mainly where there is repetition of ideas, where I did not feel that the deletion changed the substance or essential sequence of the talk.

Appendix E - Coding framework

The table below contains the list of codes, contained with the set of folders in NVivo computer software, used in the process of data analysis and in the development of theoretical memos.

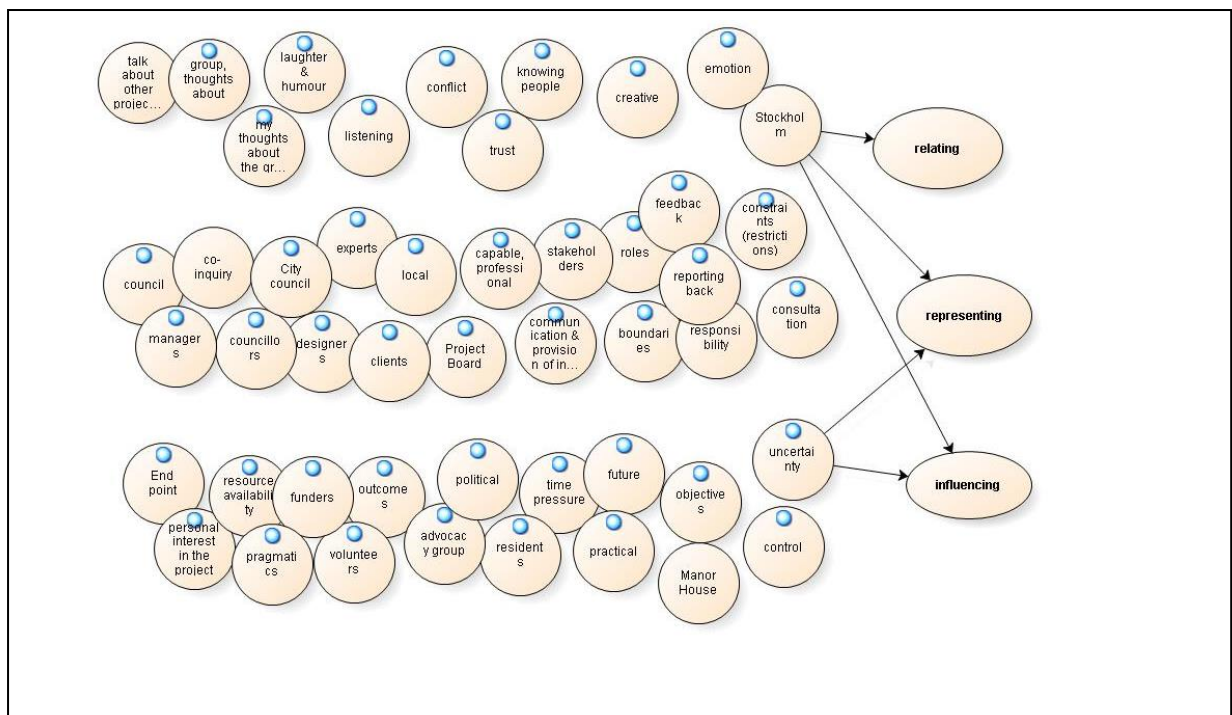
Folder	Key codes	Definition of code
Talk about silence and voice	Talk about silence and voice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in the abstract - in this project - in specific case (meeting) 	Participants' talk about speaking up or staying silent, why, when, etc
	Transitions between silence and voice	Descriptions of transition either from silence-voice or voice-silence
Silence	Participants' examples of silence	Participants' identification of examples of their own silence in this project
	Examples of my own silence	My fieldnote identification of moments when I stayed silent
	My guess at other people's silence	Fieldnote data or interview data where I interpret participant as staying silent about something
	Forms of silence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - acoustic - thematic - discrete act - in hindsight - as state 	My identification of different types of silence in the data
Voice	Participants' examples of voice	Participants' identification of moments when they had spoken up
Influencing	Control	Control, who wanting control, etc
	Funders	Descriptions of and references to funders
	Future	Participants' references to future (what will happen, what may happen, waiting to see, consequences)

	Manor House	Descriptions of interactions with MH owners or representatives, references to MH work or future plans
	Objectives and outcomes	Objectives and (intended or actual) outcomes of project (variability)
	Personal interest in the project	Participants' interest in the project work
	Resource availability	Descriptions of and reference to resource shortage, availability, requirements
	Uncertainty	References to uncertainty, or not knowing (how to do something, what to do, who knows what, etc)
Interpersonal relationships	Conflict	Reference to conflict between people
	Knowing people	References to knowing people, getting to know them
	Listening	References to listening, importance of, not being listened to
	Personality	Attributed characteristics of other project group members
	Personality clash	Descriptions of personality clash in the project group
	Talk about other members of the group	Data relating to group members from source other than themselves
	Thoughts about the group	Data about group relationships (cohesion, differences, etc) from participants
	Trust	Descriptions of trust
Representation	Boundaries	Descriptions and references to boundaries of various types (around role, project work, etc)
	Client relationship	Description of university-council relationship as client-based
	Constraints	References to constraints in project work

	Reporting duties	Descriptions of and reference to communication processes, requirements to receive or to provide information
	Experience	Reference to experience (accumulation of, lack of, process of learning)
	Experts	Descriptions of and references to expert (who counts as, standard in order to be one, etc)
	Managers	Descriptions of managers (relationships with, duties to, etc)
	Responsibility	Descriptions of or references to individual or organisational responsibility
	Roles	Description of or references to role
Heteroglossia	Academic	Descriptions of academic / university work (processes, requirements, etc)
	City Council	Descriptions of City Council work processes, priorities, etc
	Collaborative inquiry	Descriptions of and references to co-inquiry, contrasts of co-inquiry to other processes e.g. consultation
	council	Description of local authority work, requirements, etc in general
	councillors	Descriptions of relationships with councillors (obligations to, interactions with, etc)
	County Council	Descriptions of County Council work processes, priorities, etc
	Decisions and decision-making	Descriptions of decision-making processes (who involved, what type, etc) (variability)
	Different meanings from same word	Descriptive examples of different meanings from same word used in different context
	Purpose of meetings	Descriptions of the project group meetings' purpose (variability)

	Novelty	Descriptions and references to novelty, new process in this project, necessity to develop process or ways of working
	Political	Descriptions of political work, process and requirements (councillors, politicians, elections, etc)
	Public	Descriptions of general public, accountability to, etc (variability)
	Relationship between the two projects	Comparisons between goals, working processes etc between university and council projects

Figure 2 - Conceptual model developed in NVivo (as at June 2014)



Bibliography

- Agar, M. (1973), *Ripping and Running: a formal ethnography of urban heroin addicts*, Seminar Press, New York.
- Ainsworth, S. and Hardy, C. (2004), 'Discourse and Identities', in Grant, Hardy, Oswick and Putnam (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Organisational Discourse*, SAGE Publications Limited, London.
- Allen, G. (2000), *Intertextuality*, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon.
- Alvesson, M. (2002), *Postmodernism and Social Research, Understanding Social Research*, Open University Press, Buckingham.
- Alvesson, M. and Karreman, D. (2000), 'Varieties of discourse: On the study of organizations through discourse analysis', *Human Relations*, Vol.53, No.9, pp.1125-49.
- Alvesson, M. and Sköldberg, K. (2000), *Reflexive Methodology: new vistas for qualitative research*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London.
- Argyris, C. (1990), *Overcoming Organizational Defenses: facilitating organizational learning*, Allyn and Bacon, MA, USA.
- (1991), 'Teaching Smart People How to Learn', *Harvard Business Review*, Vol.May-June, pp.99-109.
- (1994), 'Good Communication That Blocks Learning', *Harvard Business Review*, Vol.72, No.4, p.77.
- Ashford, S.J., Sutcliffe, K.M. and Christianson, M.K. (2009), 'Speaking Up and Speaking Out: the leadership dynamics of voice in organizations', in Greenberg and Edwards (eds), *Voice and Silence in Organizations*, Emerald Group Publishing Ltd, UK, pp. 175-202.
- Asch, P. and Connor, L. (1994), 'Opportunities for "double-voicing" in ethnographic film', *Visual Anthropology Review*, Vol.10, No.2, pp.14-27.
- Austin, J.L. (1975/1962), *How to Do Things with Words*, 2nd edition, The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955, Clarendon Press, Oxford (originally published 1962).
- Bakhtin, M. (Holquist, M. translator and editor) (1981), *The dialogic imagination: four essays*, Slavic Series, University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M. (1984), *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Manchester University Press, Manchester.

- Bakhtin, M. (Holquist, M. and Emerson, C. translators and editors) (1986), *Speech genres and other late essays*, University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas.
- Basso, K. (1970), "'To Give up on Words': Silence in Western Apache Culture', *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vol.26, No.3, pp.213-30.
- Bechky, B.A. (2003), 'Sharing Meaning across Occupational Communities: The Transformation of Understanding on a Production Floor', *Organization Science*, Vol.14, No.3, pp. 312-330.
- Bell, E., Meyerson, D., Nkomo, S. and Scully, M. (2003), 'Interpreting Silence and Voice in the Workplace', *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, Vol.39, No.4, pp.381-414.
- Bell, M.P., Özbilgin, M.F., Beauregard, T.A. and Sürgevil, O. (2011), 'Voice, silence, and diversity in 21st century organizations: Strategies for inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender employees', *Human Resource Management*, Vol.50, No.1, pp.131-46.
- Belova, O., King, I. and Sliwa, M. (2008), 'Introduction: Polyphony and Organization Studies: Mikhail Bakhtin and Beyond', *Organization Studies*, Vol.29, No.4, pp.493-500.
- Beugré, C. (2010), 'Organizational conditions fostering employee engagement: the role of "voice"', in S. Albrecht (ed.), *Handbook of Employee Engagement*, Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, Cheltenham, UK, pp. 174-81.
- Bienefeld, N. and Grote, G. (2012), 'Silence that may kill: When aircrew members don't speak up and why', *Aviation Psychology and Applied Human Factors*, Vol.2, No.1, pp.1-10.
- (2013), 'Speaking up in ad hoc multiteam systems: Individual-level effects of psychological safety, status, and leadership within and across teams', *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, Vol.23, No.6, pp.930-45.
- Bies, R. (2009), 'Sounds of Silence: identifying new motives and behaviors', in J Greenberg and M Edwards (eds), *Voice and Silence in Organizations*, Emerald Group Publishing Ltd, UK.
- Billig, M. (2001/1997), 'Discursive, Rhetorical and Ideological Messages', in Wetherall et al. (eds.), *Discourse, Theory and Practice: a reader*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London.
- Billig, M., Condor, S., Edwards, D., Gane, M., Middleton, D. and Radley, A. (1988), *Ideological Dilemmas: a social psychology of everyday thinking*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London.

- Blackman, D. and Sadler-Smith, E. (2009), 'The Silent and the Silenced in Organizational Knowing and Learning', *Management Learning*, Vol.40, No.5, pp.569-85.
- Blommaert, J., Collins, J. and Slembrouck, S. (2005), 'Polycentricity and interactional regimes in "global neighbourhoods"', *Ethnography*, Vol.6, pp.205-35.
- Bowen, F. and Blackmon, K. (2003), 'Spirals of Silence: The Dynamic Effects of Diversity on Organizational Voice', *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol.40, No.6, pp.1393-417.
- Brinsfield, C. (2014), 'Employee voice and silence in organizational behavior', in Wilkinson et al. (eds.), *Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK.
- Brinsfield, C., Edwards, M. and Greenberg, J. (2009), 'Voice and Silence in Organizations: historical review and current conceptualizations', in J. Greenberg and M. Edwards (eds.), *Voice and Silence in Organizations*, Emerald Group Publishing Ltd, UK, pp.3 -33.
- Brown, A.D. and Coupland, C. (2005), 'Sounds of Silence: Graduate Trainees, Hegemony and Resistance', *Organization Studies*, Vol.26, No.7, pp.1049-69.
- Bucholz, M. (2000), 'The politics of transcription', *Journal of Pragmatics*, Vol.32, pp.1439-1465.
- Burr, V. (2003), *Social Constructionism*, 2nd edition, Routledge, Sussex, UK.
- Burris, E.R. (2012), 'The Risks and Rewards of Speaking Up: managerial responses to employee voice', *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol.55, No.4, pp.851-75.
- Burris, E.R., Detert, J.R. and Romney, A.C. (2013), 'Speaking Up vs. Being Heard: The Disagreement Around and Outcomes of Employee Voice', *Organization Science*, Vol.24, No.1, pp.22-38.
- Casey, D. (1985), 'When is a team not a team', *Personnel Management*, Vol.17, No.1, pp.26-9.
- Charlwood, A. (2006), 'What determined employer voice choice in Britain in the 20th century? A critique of the 'Sound of Silence' model', *Socio-Economic Review*, Vol.4, No.2, pp.301-9.
- Chia, R. (1996), 'The problem of reflexivity in organizational research: towards a postmodern science of organization', *Organization*, Vol.3, No.1, pp.31-59.
- Coffey, A. (1999), *The Ethnographic Self: fieldwork and the representation of identity*, SAGE Publications, London.

- Coffey, A. and Atkinson, P. (1996), *Making Sense of Qualitative Data: complementary research strategies*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London.
- Cooren, F., Kuhn, T., Cornelissen, J.P. and Clark, T. (2011), 'Communication, Organizing and Organization: An Overview and Introduction to the Special Issue', *Organization Studies*, Vol.32, No.9, pp.1149-70.
- Cooren, F. and Sandler, S. (2014), 'Polyphony, ventriloquism, and constitution: In dialogue with Bakhtin', *Communication Theory*, Vol.24, No.3, pp.225-44.
- Cosley, B.J., McCoy, S.K. and Gardner, S.K. (2014), 'Collaborative Voice: Examining the Role of Voice in Interdisciplinary Collaboration', *International Journal of Organization Theory and Behavior*, Vol.17, No.2, pp.139-62.
- Creed, W.E.D. (2003), 'Voice Lessons: Tempered Radicalism and the Use of Voice and Silence', *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol.40, No.6, pp.1503-36.
- Cresswell, J. (2012), 'Including social discourses and experience in research on refugees, race and ethnicity', *Discourse and Society*, Vol.23, No.5, pp.553-575.
- Cullinane, N. and Donaghey, J. (2014), 'Employee silence', in A. Wilkinson, J. Donaghey, T. Dundon and R.B. Freeman (eds), *Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK, pp. 398-409.
- Cunliffe, A.L. (2002), 'Social Poetics as Management Inquiry: A Dialogical Approach', *Journal of Management Inquiry*, Vol.11, No.2, pp.128-146.
- Cunliffe, A.L. (2003), 'Reflexive inquiry in organizational research: questions and possibilities', *Human Relations*, Vol.56, No.8, pp.983-1003.
- (2011), 'Crafting Qualitative Research: Morgan and Smircich 30 Years On', *Organizational Research Methods*, Vol.14, No.4, pp.647-73.
- Cunliffe, A.L. and Karunanayake, G. (2013), 'Working within hyphen-spaces in ethnographic research: Implications for research identities and practice', *Organizational Research Methods*, Vol.16, No.3, pp.364-92.
- Czarniawska, B. (2004), *Narratives in Social Science Research*, available at <http://dx.doi.org.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/10.4135/9781849209502> (accessed October 2012)
- Czarniawska, B. (2008), 'Organizing: how to study it and how to write about it', *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management*, Vol.3, No.1, pp.4-20.
- Davies, B. and Harré, R. (1990), 'Positioning: The discursive production of selves', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, Vol.20, No.1, pp.43-63.

- De Dreu, C.K.W., De Vries, N.K., Franssen, H. and Alting, W.M.M. (2000), 'Minority Dissent in Organizations: Factors Influencing Willingness to Dissent', *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, Vol.30, No.12, pp.2451-66.
- De Dreu, C.K.W. and West, M.A. (2001), 'Minority Dissent and Team Innovation: The Importance of Participation in Decision Making', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol.86, No.6, pp.1191-201.
- de Peuter, J. (1998), 'The Dialogics of Narrative Identity', in M.M. Bell and M. Gardiner (eds.), *Bakhtin and the Human Sciences*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London.
- Dentith, S. (1995), *Bakhtinian Thought: an introductory reader*, Routledge, London.
- Detert, J.R. and Burris, E.R. (2007), 'Leadership Behaviour and Employee Voice: is the door really open?', *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol.50, No.4, pp.869-84.
- Detert, J.R., Burris, E.R. and Harrison, D.A. (2010), 'Debunking Four Myths About Employee Silence', *Harvard Business Review*, Vol.88, No.6, pp.26.
- Detert, J.R. and Edmondson, A. (2011), 'Implicit Voice Theories: taken-for-granted rules of self-censorship at work', *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol.54, No.3, pp.461-88.
- Detert, J.R. and Trevino, L. (2010), 'Speaking Up to Higher-Ups: how supervisors and skip-level leaders influence employee voice', *Organization Science*, Vol.21, No.1, pp.249-70.
- Donaghey, J., Cullinane, N., Dundon, T. and Wilkinson, A. (2011), 'Reconceptualising employee silence: problems and prognosis', *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol.25, No.1, pp.51-67.
- Dutton, J. and Ashford, S. (1993), 'Selling Issues to Top Management', *Academy of Management Review*, Vol.18, No.3, pp.397-428.
- Dutton, J.E., Ashford, S.J., Lawrence, K.A. and Miner-Rubino, K. (2002), 'Red Light, Green Light: Making Sense of the Organizational Context for Issue Selling', *Organization Science*, No.4, pp.355-369.
- Dutton, J.E., Ashford, S.J., O'Neill, R.M. and Lawrence, K.A. (2001), 'Moves That Matter: Issue Selling and Organizational Change', *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol.44, No.4, pp.716-736.
- Edley, N. (2001), 'Analysing Masculinity: Interpretative Repertoires, Ideological Dilemmas and Subject Positions' in M. Wetherall, S. Taylor and S.J. Yates (eds.) *Discourse as Data: a guide for analysis*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London.

- Edmondson, A.C. (2003), 'Speaking Up in the Operating Room: How Team Leaders Promote Learning in Interdisciplinary Action Teams', *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol.40, No.6, pp.1419-52.
- Edwards, D. (2001/1997), 'Emotion' in M. Wetherall, S. Taylor and S.J. Yates (eds), *Discourse Theory and Practice: a reader*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London (originally published 1997).
- Ellis, C. (2004), *The Ethnographic I: a methodological novel about autoethnography*, AltaMira Press, Walnut Creek, CA.
- Erickson, F. (2004), *Talk and Social Theory*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Farrell, D. (1983), 'Exit, Voice, Loyalty, and Neglect as Responses to Job Dissatisfaction: A Multidimensional Scaling Study', *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol.26, No.4, pp.596-607.
- Farrell, L. (2006), *Making Knowledge Common: literacy and knowledge at work*, Peter Lang, New York.
- Fitch, K. (2001), 'The Ethnography of Speaking: Sapir/Whorf, Hymes and Moerman', in M. Wetherall, S. Taylor, and S.J. Yates (eds.), *Discourse Theory and Practice: a reader*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London.
- Fletcher, D. and Watson, T. (2007), 'Voice, Silence and the Business of Construction: Loud and Quiet Voices in the Construction of Personal, Organizational and Social Realities', *Organization*, Vol.14, No.2, pp.155-74.
- Foster, E. (2004), 'Research on Gossip: Taxonomy, Methods and Future Directions', *Review of General Psychology*, Vol.8, No.2, pp.78-99.
- Fricker, M. (2012), 'Silence and Institutional Prejudice', in S.Crasnow and A.Superson (eds), *Out from the Shadows: analytical feminist contributions to traditional philosophy*, Oxford Scholarship Online: available at DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199855469.001.0001 (accessed April 2013).
- Gambarotto, F. and Cammazzo, A. (2010), 'Dreams of silence: Employee voice and innovation in a public sector community of practice', *Innovation-Management Policy and Practice*, Vol.12, No.2, pp.166-79.
- Gardiner, M. (1998), 'The Incomparable Monster of Solipsism': Bakhtin and Merleau-Ponty', in M.M. Bell and M. Gardiner (eds.), *Bakhtin and the Human Sciences*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London.
- Garfinkel, H. (1967), *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- George, J. (2010), 'More engagement is not necessarily better: the benefits of fluctuating levels of engagement' in S.Albrecht (ed.), *Handbook of Employee*

Engagement: perspectives, issues, research and practice, Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, Cheltenham, UK.

Gergen, K. (1994), *Realities and Relationships: soundings in social construction*, Harvard University Press, London.

Goffman, E. (1959), *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Allen Lane Penguin Press, Great Britain (1969 in Great Britain).

---- (2003/1967), 'On Face-Work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction', *Reflections*, Vol.4, No.3, pp.7-13 (originally published 1967).

---- (1974), *Frame Analysis: an essay on the organization of experience*, Northeastern University Press, Boston, MA.

---- (1983), 'The Interaction Order: American Sociological Association, 1982 Presidential Address', *American Sociological Review*, Vol.48, No.1, pp.1-17.

Golden-Biddle, K. and Locke, K. (1993), 'Appealing Work: an investigation of how ethnographic texts convince', *Organization Science*, Vol.4, No.4, pp.595-616.

Gray, B. and Schruijer, S. (2012), 'Integrating Multiple Voices: Working with Collusion in Multiparty Collaborations', in C. Steyaert and B. Van Looy (eds.), *Relational Practices, Participative Organizing*, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, ebook [http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/S1877-6361\(2010\)0000007011](http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/S1877-6361(2010)0000007011), pp.121-35.

Greenberg, J. and Edwards, M. (eds.) (2009), *Voice and Silence in Organizations*, Emerald Group Publishing Ltd, UK.

Gruman, J.A. and Saks, A.M. (2014), 'Being psychologically present when speaking up: employee voice engagement', in A. Wilkinson, J. Donaghey, T. Dundon and R. Freeman (eds.), *Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham.

Gumperz, J. (1982), *Discourse Strategies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (2007), *Ethnography: principles in practice*, 3rd edition, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon.

Hardy, C. and Clegg, S. (1997), 'Relativity Without Relativism: Reflexivity in Post-Paradigm Organization Studies', *British Journal of Management*, Vol.8, No.2, S5-S17.

Harlos, K. (2001), 'When Organizational Voice Systems Fail: more on the deaf ear syndrome and frustration effects', *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, Vol.37., No.3, pp.324-342.

Hawe, K. and Hadfield, M. (2011), *Video in Social Science Research: functions and forms*, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon.

- Heath, C., Hindmarsh, J. and Luff, P. (2010), *Video in Qualitative Research: analysing social interaction in everyday life*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London.
- Hibbert, P., Coupland, C. and MacIntosh, R. (2010), 'Reflexivity: recursion and relationality in organizational research processes', *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management*, Vol.5, No.1, pp.47-62.
- Hirschman, A. (1970), *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: responses to decline in firms, organizations and states*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Husserl, E. (Carr, D. translator) (1970), *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: an introduction to phenomenological philosophy*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, IL.
- Hutchby, I. and Wooffitt, R. (1998), *Conversation Analysis: principles, practices and applications*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Hymes, D. (1972), 'Models of the interaction of language and social life', in Gumperz and Hymes (eds.), *Directions in sociolinguistics: the ethnography of communication*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York.
- Hymes, D. (1964), 'Introduction: towards ethnographies of communication', *American Anthropologist*, Vol.66, No.6, pp.1-34.
- Hymes, D. (1962), 'The ethnography of speaking', in Gladwin and Sturtevant (eds.) *Anthropology and Human Behavior*, Anthropological Society of Washington, Washington DC.
- Jacobson, D. (1995), 'Freedom of Speech Acts? A response to Langton', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol.24, No.1, pp. 64-79.
- Jaffe, A. (2007), 'Variability in transcription and the complexities of representation, authority and voice', *Discourse Studies*, Vol.9, No.6, pp.831-836.
- Janis, I.L. (1972), *Victims of Groupthink: a psychological study of foreign-policy decisions and fiascoes*, 1st edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, USA.
- Jefferson, A. (2001), 'Bodymatters: Self and Other in Bakhtin, Sartre and Barthes' in K.Hirschkop and D.Shepherd, *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, 2nd edition, Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- Johannesen, R.L. (1974), 'The Functions of Silence: A Plea For Communication Research', *Western Speech*, Vol.38, No.1, pp.25-35.
- Kahn, W.A. (2010), 'The essence of engagement: lessons from the field', in S.L.Albrecht (ed.), *Handbook of Employee Engagement*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham.

- Kassing, J.W. (2002), 'Speaking Up: identifying employees' upward dissent strategies', *Management Communication Quarterly*, Vol.16, No.2, pp.187-209.
- Keating, E. (2001), 'The Ethnography of Communication', *Handbook of Ethnography*, pp.285-302.
- Kent, T. (1998), 'Hermeneutics and Genre: Bakhtin and the problem of communicative interaction', in F.Farmer (ed.), *Landmark Essays: on Bakhtin, Rhetoric and Writing*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, New Jersey.
- Kish-Gephart, J., Detert, J., Treviño, L.K. and Edmondson, A. (2011), 'Silenced by Fear: the nature and consequences of fear at work', *Rotman Magazine*, pp.28-33.
- Kitzinger, C. and Frith, H. (2001/1999), 'Just Say No? The use of conversation analysis in developing a feminist perspective on sexual refusal', in M. Wetherall, S. Taylor and S.J. Yates (eds.), *Discourse Theory and Practice: a reader*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London (article originally published 1999).
- Knoll, M. and Dick, R. (2013), 'Do I Hear the Whistle...? A First Attempt to Measure Four Forms of Employee Silence and Their Correlates', *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol.113, No.2, pp.349-362.
- Kurzban, D. (1997), *Discourse of Silence*, John Benjamins, Philadelphia, PA, USA.
- (2007), 'Towards a typology of silence', *Journal of Pragmatics*, Vol.39, No.10, pp.1673-1688.
- (2011), 'On silence', *Journal of Pragmatics*, Vol.43, No.9, pp.2275-2277.
- Larrain, A. and Haye, A. (2012a), 'The discursive nature of inner speech', *Theory and Psychology*, Vol.22, No.1, pp.3-22.
- Larrain, A. and Haye, A. (2012b), 'Discursive analysis of experience: alterity, positioning and tension', *Discourse and Society*, Vol.23, No.5, pp.596-601.
- Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991), *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- LePine, J.A. and Van Dyne, L. (1998), 'Predicting Voice Behavior in Work Groups', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol.83, No.6, pp.853-868.
- Liang, J., C. Farh, C.I. and Farh, J.-L. (2012), 'Psychological Antecedents of Promotive and Prohibitive Voice: a Two-Wave Examination', *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol.55, No.1, pp.71-92.
- Lind, A. and Kulik, C.T. (2009), 'Hear Me Out: voice and justice', in J.Greenberg and M. Edwards (eds.), *Voice and Silence in Organizations*, Emerald Group Publishing Ltd, UK.

- Linell, P. (2009), *Rethinking language, mind, and world dialogically: interactional and contextual theories of human sense-making*, Information Age Publishing, Inc., Charlotte, NC.
- Linstead, S. (1993), 'From Postmodern Anthropology to Deconstructive Ethnography', *Human Relations*, Vol.46, No.1, pp.97-120.
- Llewellyn, N. (2011), 'The delicacy of the gift: passing donations and leaving change', *Discourse and Society*, Vol.22, No.2, pp.155-174.
- Lukes, S. (1974), *Power: a radical view*, Macmillan, London.
- Lustenberger, D.E. and Williams, K.D. (2009), 'Ostracism in Organizations', in J. Greenberg and M. Edwards (eds.), *Voice and Silence in Organizations*, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Bingley, UK, pp.245-271.
- Maybin, J. (2001), 'Language, struggle and voice: the Bakhtin/Volosinov writings', in M. Wetherall, S. Taylor and S.J. Yates (eds.) *Discourse Theory and Practice: a reader*, Sage Publications Ltd, London.
- Maybin, J. and Tusting, K. (2011), 'Linguistic ethnography', *Routledge Handbook of Applied Linguistics*. London: Routledge, pp.515-528.
- Mazzei, L.A. (2003), 'Inhabited silences: In pursuit of a muffled subtext', *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol.9, No.3, pp.355-368.
- (2004), 'Silent Listeners: Deconstructive Practices in Discourse-Based Research', *Educational Researcher*, Vol.33, No.2, pp.26-34.
- (2007), 'Toward a Problematic of Silence in Action Research', *Educational Action Research*, Vol.15, No.4, pp.631-642.
- Mead, G.H. (1934), *Mind, Self and Society*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, USA.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962), *Phenomenology of Perception*, Routledge and Keegan Paul Ltd, London.
- Mey, J.L. (2001), *Pragmatics: an introduction*, 2nd edition, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, Oxford.
- Miceli, M.P. and Near, J.P. (1988), 'Individual and Situational Correlates of Whistle-blowing', *Personnel Psychology*, Vol.41, No.2, pp.267-281.
- Milliken, F.J. and Lam, N. (2009), 'Making the Decision to Speak Up or to Remain Silent: implications for organizational learning', in J. Greenberg and M. Edwards (eds.), *Voice and Silence in Organizations*, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Bingley, UK, pp.225-244.

- Milliken, F.J. and Martins, L.L. (1996), 'Searching for Common Threads: Understanding the Multiple Effects of Diversity in Organizational Groups', *Academy of Management Review*, Vol.21, No.2, pp.402-433.
- Milliken, F.J., Morrison, E.W. and Hewlin, P.F. (2003), 'An Exploratory Study of Employee Silence: Issues that Employees Don't Communicate Upward and Why', *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol.40, No.6, pp.1453-1476.
- Morison, T. and Macleod, C. (2014), 'When Veiled Silences Speak: reflexivity, trouble and repair as methodological tools for interpreting the unspoken in discourse-based data', *Qualitative Research*, Vol.14, No.6, pp. 694-711.
- Morris, P. (ed.) 1994, *The Bakhtin Reader: selected writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, Voloshinov*, Edward Arnold, Great Britain.
- Morrison, E.W. (1994), 'Role Definitions and Organizational Citizenship Behavior: The Importance of the Employee's Perspective', *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol.37, No.6, pp.1543-1567.
- (2011), 'Employee Voice Behaviour: integration and directions for future research', *The Academy of Management Annals*, Vol.5, No.1, pp.373-412.
- Morrison, E.W. and Milliken, F. (2000), 'Organizational Silence: a barrier to change and development in a pluralistic world', *Academy of Management Review*, Vol.25, No.4, pp.706-725.
- Morrison, E.W., Wheeler-Smith, S.L. and Kamdar, D. (2011), 'Speaking Up in Groups: A Cross-Level Study of Group Voice Climate and Voice', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol.96, No.1, pp.183-191.
- Muntanyola-Saura, D. (2012), 'Expert knowledge and video-aided ethnography a methodological account', *Revue de Synthèse*, Vol.6, No.1, pp.75-100.
- Nemeth, C. and Goncalo, J. (2011), 'Rogues and Heroes: finding value in dissent', in J. Jetten and M. Hornsey (eds.), *Rebels in Groups: Dissent, Deviance, Difference and Defiance*, 1st edition, Blackwell Publishing, Chichester, UK, pp.17-35.
- Noelle-Neumann, E. (1974), 'The Spiral of Silence: A Theory of Public Opinion', *Journal of Communication*, Vol.24, pp.43-51.
- Olson-Buchanan, J.B. and Boswell, W.R. (2001), 'Voicing Discontent: the role of employee loyalty and informality', *Academy of Management Proceedings*, CM: C6.
- Perkins, D. (2014), 'Conceptualizing defensive silence in project-manager to project-sponsor communication', *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, Vol.35, No.1, pp.2-19.

- Perlow, L. and Williams, S. (2003), 'Is Silence Killing Your Company?', *Harvard Business Review*, Vol.81, No.5, pp.52-58.
- Piderit, S.K. and Ashford, S.J. (2003), 'Breaking Silence: Tactical Choices Women Managers Make in Speaking Up About Gender-Equity Issues', *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol.40, No.6, pp.1477-1502.
- Pinder, C.C. and Harlos, K.P. (2001), 'Employee silence: Quiescence and acquiescence as responses to perceived injustice', in G.R. Ferris (ed.), *Research in personnel and human resources management*, Vol 20, Elsevier Science/JAI Press, US, pp.331-369.
- Pink, S. (2006), *The Future of Visual Anthropology: engaging the senses*, Routledge, London.
- Pink, S. (2007), *Doing Visual Ethnography*, SAGE Publications Ltd, available: <http://srmo.sagepub.com/view/doing-visual-ethnography/SAGE.xml> (accessed 10 March 2014)
- Pink, S. (2009), *Doing Sensory Ethnography*, SAGE Publications Ltd, available: <http://srmo.sagepub.com/view/doing-sensory-ethnography/SAGE.xml> (accessed 10 March 2014)
- Poland, B. and Pederson, A. (1998), 'Reading between the lines: Interpreting silences in qualitative research', *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol.4, No.2, pp.293-312.
- Potter, J. (2001), 'Wittgenstein and Austin', in M. Wetherall, S. Taylor and S.J. Yates (eds.), *Discourse Theory and Practice: a Reader*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London.
- Potter, J. and Wetherall, M. (1987), *Discourse and Social Psychology: beyond attitudes and behaviour*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London.
- Premeaux, S.F. and Bedeian, A.G. (2003), 'Breaking the Silence: The Moderating Effects of Self-Monitoring in Predicting Speaking Up in the Workplace', *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol.40, No.6, pp.1537-1562.
- Pritchard, K. (2011), 'From 'being there' to 'being ... where?': relocating ethnography', *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management*, Vol.6, No.3, pp.230-245.
- Rampton, B. (2006), *Language in Late Modernity: interaction in an urban school*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Rampton, B. et al. (2004), 'UK Linguistic Ethnography: a discussion paper', UK Linguistic Ethnography Forum coordinating committee, available at: <http://www.lingethnog.org/docs/rampton-et-al-2004-uk-linguistic-ethnography-a-discussion-paper/> (accessed 5 April 2015)

- Ramsey, C. (2008), Managing to learn: the social poetics of a "polyphonic" classroom', *Organization Studies*, Vol.29. No.4, pp.543-558.
- Ryan, K.D. and Oestreich, D.K. (1998), *Driving Fear out of the Workplace: creating the high-trust, high-performance organization*, 2nd edition, The Jossey-Bass business and management series, Jossey-Bass Inc. Publishers, San Francisco, California.
- Saldaña, J. (2009), *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London.
- Sambrook, S.A., Jones, N. and Doloriet, C. (2014), 'Employee engagement and autoethnography: being and studying self', *Journal of Workplace Learning*, Vol.26, No.3/4, pp.172-187.
- Samra-Fredricks, D. and Bargiela-Chiappini, F. (2008), 'Introduction to the symposium on the foundations of organizing: the contribution from Garfinkel, Goffman and Sacks', *Organization Studies*, Vol.29, No.5, pp.653-675.
- Sapir, E. (1921), *Language: an introduction to the study of speech*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York.
- Saville-Troike, M. (1985), 'The place of silence in an integrated theory of communication', in D. Tannen and M. Saville-Troike (eds.), *Perspectives on Silence*, Ablex Publishing Corporation, New Jersey.
- (2003), *The Ethnography of Communication*, 3rd edition, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, Oxford.
- Scollon, R. (1985), 'The machine stops: Silence in the metaphor of malfunction', in D. Tannen and M. Saville-Troike (eds.), *Perspectives on Silence*, Ablex, New Jersey, pp.21-30.
- Searle, J.R. (1969), *Speech Acts: an essay in the philosophy of language*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Shapiro, D.L. (1993), 'Reconciling Theoretical Differences among Procedural Justice Researchers by re-evaluating what it means to have "One's Views Considered": implications for third-party managers', in R. Cropanzano (ed.), *Justice in the Workplace: Approaching Fairness in Human Resource Management*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, New Jersey, USA, pp.51-78.
- Shotter, J. (1993), *Conversational Realities: constructing life through language*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London.
- Shotter, J. (2004), 'Expressing and Legitimizing "Actionable Knowledge" from Within "The Moment of Acting"', *Concepts and Transformation*, Vol.9, No.2, pp.205-229.

- Shotter, J. (2008), 'Dialogism and Polyphony in Organizing Theorizing in Organization Studies: Action Guiding Anticipations and the Continuous Creation of Novelty', *Organization Studies*, Vol.29, No.4, pp.501-524.
- Shotter, J. (2012), 'Agentive spaces, the background, and other not well articulated influences in shaping our lives', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, Vol.43, No.2, pp.133-154.
- Shotter, J. and Billig, M. (1998), 'A Bakhtinian Psychology: From Out of the Heads of Individuals and into the Dialogues between Them', in M. Mayerfeld Bell and M. Gardiner (eds.), *Bakhtin and the Human Sciences*, SAGE Publications, London.
- Simpson, B. and Carroll, B. (2008), 'Re-viewing 'role' in processes of identity construction', *Organization*, Vol.15, No.1, pp.29-50.
- Slutskaya, N., Simpson, A. and Hughes, J. (2012), 'Lessons from photoelicitation: encouraging working men to speak', *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management*, Vol.7, No.1, pp.16-33.
- Syed, J. (2014), 'Diversity management and missing voices', in A. Wilkinson, J. Donaghey, T. Dundon and R.B. Freeman (eds.), *Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, pp.421-438.
- Tangirala, S. and Ramanujam, R. (2008), 'Employee Silence on Critical Work Issues: the cross level effects of procedural justice climate', *Personnel Psychology*, Vol.61, No.1, pp.37-68.
- Tannen, D. (1985), 'Silence: Anything But', in D. Tannen and M. Saville-Troike (eds), *Perspectives on Silence*, Ablex Publishing Corporation, Norwood, New Jersey, USA, pp.93-112.
- Taylor, J.R. and Cooren, F. (1997), 'What makes communication 'organizational'?', *Journal of Pragmatics*, Vol.27, No.4, pp.409-438.
- Taylor, J.R., Cooren, F., Giroux, N. and Robichaud, D. (1996), 'The communicational basis of organization: Between the conversation and the text', *Communication Theory*, Vol.6, No.1, pp.1-39.
- Todorov, T. (1984), *Mikhail Bakhtin: the Dialogic Principle*, Manchester University Press, Manchester
- Tsoukas, H. (2009), 'A Dialogical Approach to the Creation of New Knowledge in Organizations', *Organization Science*, Vol.20, No.6, pp.941-957.
- Tsoukas, H. and Chia, R. (2002), 'On Organizational Becoming: rethinking organizational change', *Organization Science*, Vol.13, No.5, pp.567-582.

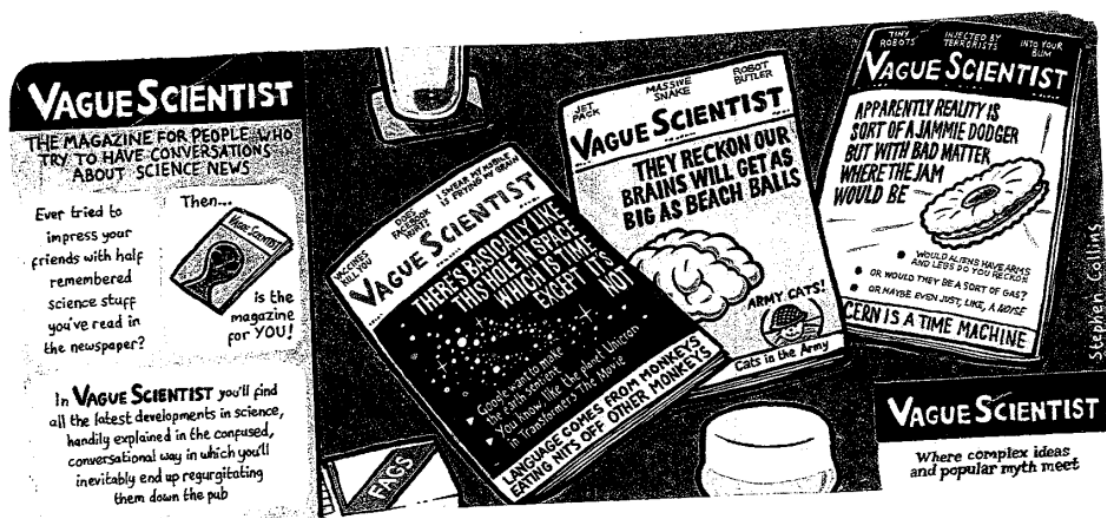
- Tusting, K. and Maybin, J. (2007), 'Linguistic ethnography and interdisciplinarity: opening the discussion', *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, Vol.11, No.5, pp.575-583.
- Vakola, M. and Bouradas, D. (2005), 'Antecedents and consequences of organisational silence: an empirical investigation', *Employee Relations*, Vol.27, No.5, pp.441-458.
- Van Dyne, L., Ang, S. and Botero, I.C. (2003), 'Conceptualizing Employee Silence and Employee Voice as Multidimensional Constructs', *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol.40, No.6, pp.1359-1392.
- Van Dyne, L., Kamdar, D. and Joireman, J. (2008), 'In-role perceptions buffer the negative impact of low LMX on helping and enhance the positive impact of high LMX on voice', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol.93, No.6, pp.1195-1207.
- Van Maanen, J. (1988), *Tales of the Field: on writing ethnography*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Van Maanen, J. (1995), *Representation in Ethnography*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London.
- Van Maanen, J. (2006), 'Ethnography then and now', *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management*, Vol.1, No.1, pp.13-21.
- Van Maanen, J. (2011), 'Ethnography as work: some rules of engagement', *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol.48, No.1, pp.218-234.
- Wageman, R., Gardner, H. and Mortensen, M. (2012), 'The changing ecology of teams: new directions for teams research', *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol.33, pp.301-315.
- Wang, Y-D. and Hsieh, H-H. (2012), 'Organizational ethical climate, perceived organizational support, and employee silence: a cross-level investigation', *Human Relations*, Vol.66, No.6, pp.783-802.
- Ward, J. and Winstanley, D. (2003), 'The Absent Presence: negative space within discourse and the construction of minority sexual identity in the workplace', *Human Relations*, Vol.56, No.10, pp.1255-1280.
- Watson, T. (2011), 'Ethnography, Reality and Truth: the vital need for studies of "how things work" in organizations and management', *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol.48, No.1, pp.202-217.
- Weick, K.E. (1979), *The Social Psychology of Organizing*, Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA.

- Wertsch, J. (2001/1990), 'The Multivoicedness of Meaning', in M. Wetherall, S. Taylor and S.J. Yates (eds.), *Discourse Theory and Practice: a reader*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London (originally published 1990).
- Wetherall, M. and Potter, J. (1988), 'Discourse analysis and the identification of interpretative repertoires' in C. Antaki (ed.), *Analysing everyday interaction: a casebook of methods*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London.
- Whorf, B. (1956), *Language, Thought and Reality*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Wilkinson, J. Donaghey, T. Dundon and R.B. Freeman (eds.) (2014a), *Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK.
- Wilkinson, A., Dundon, T., Donaghey, J. and Freeman, R.B. (2014b), 'Employee Voice: charting new terrain', in A. Wilkinson, J. Donaghey, T. Dundon and R.B. Freeman (eds.), *Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK, pp.3-16.
- Wilkinson, A. and Fay, C. (2011), 'New times for employee voice?', *Human Resource Management*, Vol.50, No.1, pp.65-74.
- Willman, P., Bryson, A. and Gomez, R. (2006), 'The sound of silence: which employers choose no employee voice and why?', *Socio-Economic Review*, Vol.4, No.2, pp.283-299.
- Withey, M.J. and Cooper, W.H. (1989), 'Predicting Exit, Voice, Loyalty, and Neglect', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol.34, pp.521-539.
- Wooffitt, R. (2001), 'Researching Psychic Practitioners: Conversation Analysis', in M. Wetherall, S. Taylor and S.J. Yates (eds.), *Discourse as Data: a guide for analysis*, Sage Publications Ltd, London, pp.49-92.
- Yanow, D. (2009), 'Organizational ethnography and methodological angst: myths and challenges in the field', *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management*, Vol.4, No.2, pp.186-199.
- Zhou, J. and George, J.M. (2001), 'When Job Dissatisfaction Leads to Creativity: encouraging the expression of voice', *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol.44, No.4, pp.682-696.

A final acknowledgement

Stephen Collin's cartoon about *Vague Scientist* magazine:

"for people who try to have conversations about science news" -
a description which captures my feeling about writing a PhD thesis.



Reproduced by kind permission of the artist. Copyright Stephen Collins